THE CARPET BAGGER

By

Opie Read & Frank Pixley

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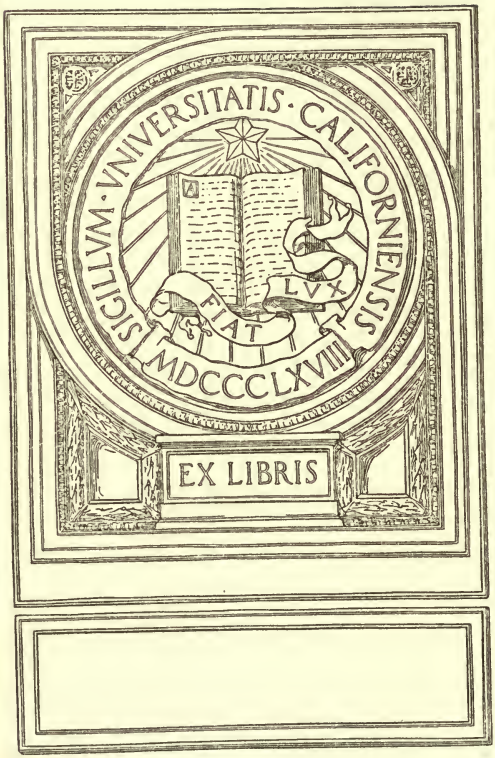
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THE

CARPETBAGGER

A NOVEL

BY

OPIE READ AND FRANK PIXLEY

OTHER STORIES BY OPIE READ

"Old Ebenezer," "My Young Master," "On the Suwanee River,"
"A Kentucky Colonel," "A Tennessee Judge,"
"The Jucklins," etc., etc.

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PREFACE

Many plays have been made from novels; this is a book made from a play. "The Carpetbagger" originally was written as a four-act comedy. It was performed for thirty weeks during the theatrical season of 1898-9, under the intelligent management of Mr. Tim Murphy, and met with a most flattering reception. There have been so many requests for the preservation of this story in permanent form, that we have been led to publish it as a novel, and the result is before you.

Don't search your histories for the Carpetbagger herein introduced. He isn't there, Our Carpetbagger is not one who really was, but one who might have been. We have not written history; but we have told much truth, a virtue which not all history possesses. The character of Melville Crance is consistent with the times in which he lived; consistent with the Yankee nature — with that of any man who, though gone astray, knows the road that leads back to honesty.

THE AUTHORS.

CHAPTER I

THE AMERICAN CZAR

At the close of the Civil War it had not been proved to the world that this government was more than an experiment. A great rebellion had been crushed but victory lay red upon a devastated land. Throughout the South force was law. It seemed that the very principle of democracy had been shrouded in a tent-cloth. Society sighed out its breath in despair. For the aged there was no hope and youth had been taught iconoclasm. Then was begun the slow work of reconstruction. Each day was a whimsical joke. Politics was a comic opera and statemanship a farce. From the North there came a horde of political gamblers whom the Southerners contemptuously called "Carpetbaggers." Many of them were men of marked ability; nearly all were "characters"; but few indeed had held positions of trust at home. They enacted the

mockery of re-establishing civil law. While some scrambled for places on the bench, the boldest managed to install themselves in the chairs once held by sedate old governors. These offices were not meted out by fitness. It is not known that they were not won with dice.

Prominent among these adventurers was Melville Crance, Governor of Mississippi. He was a tall, rather gaunt man of fifty, with a serious face and the Yankee light of humor in his eye. In Chicago he had been an auctioneer and at the beginning of the war had joined a cavalry regiment. It was said that he served with distinction. No one could doubt his nerve. No one had cause to suspect that he ever entertained an honest thought. He was not well educated but was far from ignorant. On one occasion he was heard to remark: "Oh, whenever I find that a man has more education than I have, I skip his learning and hit his common-sense." As the alien governor of a proud, old state, humbled into the dust, he was, of course, most enthusiastically hated. Socially he was ostracised.

Women turned up their noses at him in the street. His daily mail consisted largely of threatening letters. One morning while going to his office he overheard a man say: "Bet you ten dollars that fellow won't live a month." And then came the reply: "You want a sure thing when you bet." Such was the atmosphere in which he lived; and yet, within his jurisdiction, he was supreme, an absolute monarch in a republic, an American czar. The president of the nation never would have dared to usurp such authority. His word was arrest, fine, imprisonment. He and his friends owned the legislature. A rebellious member who ventured to oppose a bill was promptly brought before a committee, "investigated" and expelled from the House on the pretext of ballot-box trickery at the time of his election. It was a huge joke but the recalcitrant had to go.

A ring of lobbyists was the nearest approach to a gubernatorial board of advisers. The Governor, with his shrewdness, could not shut his eyes to the greed and lawlessness of those fellows; but why

should he care? He was there not to detect thievery but to make it profitable to himself. His sense of humor was his conscience; and humor, which is always half a rascal, ever stands ready to pardon a frailty.

Chief among these lobbyists was a man named Willetts. Before the war he had been a gambler on the Mississippi river. It was said that he once had bet two negro boys on a "four flush". An opponent "raised" him with two men and he "lay down." This was a river lie, of course, but it illustrated his character. When the war "broke out," he broke out, too—went to Canada, remained till peace was nominally established and then hurried South with the Carpetbaggers. His sole recommendation was his coolness, and it was a good one, for at that time Mississippi was not an appropriate place for a hot-headed man.

"Yes, I'm cool enough," he remarked one day to the Governor, "but I'm not as cool as you are. I understand that you've sent for your daughter."

"Yes, she's tired of school—thought I'd give her a vacation."

"Vacation? In such a place as this!" Willetts exclaimed.

The Governor looked at him with a dry smile. "Why not? I live in the finest mansion in the city of Jackson. And it's a most exclusive place. The neighbors never bother me; no back-door callers. No one ever borrows a tea-cup of vinegar from me. I'm left alone to the repose of my library, where I can muse over the bills introduced into the legislature. She'll like it and why shouldn't I have at least one congenial visitor?"

"But some one shot at you one night, not long ago."

"A bullet did come through the window and bore into 'The Life and Character of S. S. Prentiss,' but that's all. The window was up at the time and the glass wasn't broken. Yes, Nellie wanted to come down here, and I told her to come on. Things are gradually getting better. Some of the preachers have advocated forgiveness, and the lawyers are hammering away in the courts. Oh, it will all come around in time."

"Yes," said Willetts, "and I think we ought to make the most of it—in time. As soon as they hear the facts at Washington—why, we'll be bundled out of here, that's all. For a year or more they may believe that it's simply the usual howl of the spiteful, but sooner or later the truth ——"

"What's that?" The Governor looked up with a twinkle. "The truth? I'm a plain-spoken man, and I don't believe in the introduction of such strange figures of speech. I'm busy. As you go out tell Lummers to come here."

This talk had taken place in the Governor's private office, off from the executive chamber. It was mainly noted for a large demijohn which stood on a shelf. The old man took a certain number of drinks a day. What that number was no one ever discovered; but no one could say that he was ever under the influence of whiskey. He smacked his mouth over his liquor, and that sort of drinker is not often found among the drunkards.

Lummers came into the room. The Governor had given him the post of private secretary, not

because he was bright, but because he was not. He was faithful enough to be useful, dull enough not to investigate motive, and that was a virtue under the administration of Melville Crance.

"Lummers, do you remember a piece of paper with 48 and a star marked on it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know where it is?"

"Yes, sir, I can bring it to you.'

"Well, that's exactly what I don't want. I want it to disappear. Understand?"

"I think I do, sir."

"But I don't want you to think. You understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"A committee from the house may call for that paper. The rascals are getting a trifle too independent. It was stolen, Lummers."

"Yes, sir."

"And I think that we can prove, if necessary, that it was stolen by a man named Simpson. He's the chairman of an investigating committee."

"We can prove it, sir."

"If necessary. It may not be."

"Yes, sir."

"That's all. Go on."

Lummers went back to his desk in the executive chamber. Yes, he was dull; but under the tutelage of Mr. Willetts he was beginning to brighten—not sufficiently to betray himself with shining, but enough, perhaps, to serve the purpose of the gambler.

CHAPTER II

THE GIRL FROM THE NORTH

Within an hour after her arrival at the gubernatorial mansion, Nellie Crance was completely mistress of the place. She romped along the wide halls, ran up and down the stairs three steps at a time, burst unannounced into the library and put to flight a legislative committee in conference with the governor. She waited for no introduction. Why should she? Was she not the daughter of the greatest man in Mississippi, and, in her estimation, the greatest in the world?

For the first time big Jim, the governor's body servant, found his exclusive prerogatives questioned. "She's a tulip," he soliloquized, as he watched her flitting about the house. "Ef she aint I don' know er flower w'en I sees it."

"Who lives over there?" she inquired, pointing toward a big stone house half hidden among the trees beyond the garden.

"Mis' Fairburn," replied the negro, leaning against one of the tall Corinthian pillars of the broad veranda.

"Miss Fairburn," echoed Nellie, regarding the neighboring residence with evident curiosity.

"Yassum," continued Jim, "de Widder Fairburn."

"Oh! And so she's a widow. Is she nice?"

"Oh, yassum, she's powerful nice."

"Goody! I'm going to run over and see her."

The old negro shook his head. "I wouldn't, Miss," he said, "ef I wuz in yo' fix."

"Why, what's the matter with me?" she cried, glancing at her pretty frock. "Don't I look all right?"

"Oh, yassum; but dat aint it. Yo' know dar aint much visitin' gwine on twixt de Gub'nor an' dese yere folks. Dey's monstrous high-headed. Dat lady ober dar wouldn't walk on de groun' at all if dar wuz anywhar else t' walk. She wouldn't, foh a fac'. Sometimes she jest don' tech de groun' 'cept in de high places."

"The stuck-up thing!"

"Yassum."

"Well, she needn't put on any airs, I guess. Pa is the biggest man in this state and he used to be the best auctioneer in Chicago, too."

"Is dat so? I nebber heered him say: but he's no man to boast and brag 'bout hisself, anyway."

As they re-entered the house it was clear that she had given her father a new claim to greatness in the eyes of the negro.

"Well, how do you like it?" asked the Governor, with a comprehensive sweep of the arm.

"It's just perfectly elegant," was Nellie's ecstatic reply, an expression which among boarding-school girls the world over is accepted as the highest possible form of praise.

"Make yourself at home," he added. "Jim and I've got to go down to the state house now for a while. If you get lonesome you'll find plenty of books in the library."

"But I don't care for books," she exclaimed, petulantly. "I had enough of that at school. I'm going with you."

"No; not to-day," said the Governor, laying his hand upon her bronze head. "I've got some very important business to attend to and must be alone."

"It can't be so very important," she protested, "if you can do it alone. I've heard so much about state houses all my life and I've never seen one. Are they bigger than boarding-schools? Why not let me go?"

"Not to-day," he repeated, kindly. "You shall go down with me in a day or two, when I get my affairs in a little better shape, and then I'll show you everything and you may take possession."

She followed him down the hall, clinging to his arm.

"Where did you get that big black man?" she asked, confidentially, pointing to Jim. "Aren't you afraid of him?"

"Afraid? Nonsense!" he said. "Jim is my friend. The best one I have," he added, with a serious note in his voice. "I'm not afraid of any man whose blackness is only skin deep. It's the white man who is black inside that makes me lie awake nights."

Standing at the garden gate she waved farewell with a dainty handkerchief until the governor and his companion disappeared down the street and then returned to the house. For an hour or two she was kept busy investigating new mysteries about the big mansion; but at last she grew tired of exploration and settled down for rest upon the veranda. The great stone house on the other side of the garden wall furnished an abundant theme for speculation and she fell to wondering what its owner looked like. Was she old? Did she dress in black? Was she cross and crabbed or proud and haughty? Curiosity rising dominant she asked herself if it might not be possible to catch a glimpse of the unknown neighbor. At any rate there could be no harm in seeing the house at closer quarters, so she strolled down through the garden in that direction until she found further progress stopped by a high stone wall which completely shut out all view of the adjoining grounds. Walking along this barrier and seeking in vain for a gate or a rift in the masonry she suddenly was startled by a slight

commotion among the branches of a cherry tree which grew close to the wall, upon the other side, and, glancing up, saw a boy in the tree top. And cherries—red cherries—among the green leaves!

"Hello!" she cried excitedly. "Are they ripe?"

The commotion among the branches ceased and a boyish face looked down at her in surprise.

"Some of 'em are," he said. "I was trying to pick a few."

"Why, up in Chicago the cherry trees are in blossom yet."

"There'll be plenty of 'em next week," said the youngster, clambering down and swinging easily to the top of the wall. "They're pretty green now. Do you live in Chicago?"

"Ah, ha," replied Nellie, nodding her head affirmatively. "When I'm at home. I'm down here now visiting Pa. You live over there, I s'pose," she added, indicating the big stone house whose roof was discernible among the trees. "Is your mother the high-headed woman?"

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

"She's high-headed with some folks," said the boy with significant emphasis. "You are the governor's daughter, are you?"

"Ah, ha. Come on down."

"Mother wouldn't like it."

"Why not?"

"She doesn't let me go over there."

"What are you 'fraid of? I won't hurt you."

"We don't know your folks."

"Well, you'd better."

There was a minute of silence during which the cherry-picker evidently was debating some weighty question with himself. "Say," he suddenly remarked. "Can your father get me a commission in the army?"

"You bet he can," was the ready answer. "My father can get anything."

The boy dropped lightly upon a flower bed in the governor's yard. "I won't go into the house," he said.

CHAPTER III

A RAILROAD MOSTLY SWAMP

The Carpetbag government had begun to totter—there could be no doubt of that fact. The corruptionists who had long overridden law and order were fast overreaching themselves and a keen nostril already could scent the coming of danger. The old party, crushed to the ground, was beginning to lift its head. It had begun to parade the streets, beneath the folds of the conqueror's flag. It had begun to shout for equal rights and to call on the Constitution. In this there surely was no treason, but it was dangerous for the dominant power. The writing on the wall was growing plainer every day. Willetts saw it and was at no loss to interpret the unwelcome warning.

"One of these days the streets out there will be so hot I can't walk on them," he said, as he calmly surveyed the situation, "but it's always cool enough in Canada and I know the way there."

With the connivance of a few cronies in the legislature he had planned a last desperate assault upon the treasury of the plundered state. A bill had been drawn up providing for a grant of 200,000 acres of state lands to a fictitious railway corporation, existing only on paper. Included in this grant were some of the most valuable mineral deposits of the state. It was a gigantic steal and Willetts hoped to make its consummation the signal for his second flight from the South.

Only one point gave him serious uneasiness—the bill must be signed by Governor Crance. While he had no doubt that the Governor's signature could easily be obtained, his knowledge of that official caused him to fear that the cost would be prohibitive. He felt the need of a friend at court, not for influence, but for information, and turned to Lummers. "He's a two-spot," said the gambler, "but he may save the trick for us." As for Lummers he was greatly elated by the new relation and deeply gratified that he was of sufficient importance to attract the friendly consideration of Mr. Willetts.

One morning as he was sitting at his desk examining letters, Jim entered. Lummers looked up at him, glanced about the room and said: "If Mr. Willetts calls, show him in at once."

"Yas, sah," Jim replied, bowing.

"Wait a moment," Lummers added, as Jim turned to go. "If Mr. Willetts doesn't come till after the Governor gets here, leave him in the reception room and bring in his card. Understand?"

"Yas, sah," Jim replied, turning away. But before reaching the door he halted, studied a moment in a negro's heavy way and then turned again to Lummers. "Mr. Lummers, 'bout how long you reckon dis yere job gwine t' last?"

Lummers looked up in surprise. "What are you talking about?"

"I'se talkin' 'bout dis yere 'ministration job, sah. I yere 'em say dat—"

"You hear them say what?" Lummers broke in irritably.

Jim pondered and then replied: "W'y, I yere 'em say dat dis whut dey calls de kyarpetbag guberment kain't last much longer."

"Well, you don't want to hear anything like that," said Lummers, shuffling the letters, "and you don't want to be talking it, either. Do you hear?" he added looking straight at the negro.

Jim ducked his head. "Yas, sah. O' cose I likes dis place all right 'nough—you knows dat—but you also knows dat a sensible man mus' keep his eyes open in de lookout fur anudder place in case one slips from under him." He paused, scratching his head. "Yas, sah. An' ef de arthquake should come an' fling dis yere guberment in de a'r, you and de Gub'nor would light on yo' feet all right like a cat, but whar'd I be?" He grunted and shifted his weight from one leg to the other. "Huh! I'd hit de groun' an' flatten out like I been flung off'n a house."

Lummers handed him a number of letters and with an air of assumed carelessness said: "Stop your cackling. Drop these in the box."

Jim took the letters and slowly walked out, moodily shaking his head. Lummers lighted a cigar. "It's in the air," he mused. "Even that negro sees

it. Well, we'll have to hurry things, and when it comes we'll try to land on our feet. I've been here going on two years now, and I'm getting enough of it." He got up and walked about the room. "If Willetts and I can pull this thing through, the North will be good enough for me. I don't like these Southerners anyway—always poking 'round, looking for somebody to insult 'em. And if the Governor lets them have too much swing they'll carry an election against him and—well, reconstruction's all right enough, but we don't want to reconstruct too fast. Ah! Come in."

Jim had shown Willetts into the room, and was standing at the door with a grin on his face.

"Good morning," said Willetts. "Has the old man got down yet?"

"No, but I think he'll be here presently. It's time for him now," he added, glancing at the clock.

"Send the coon away," said Willetts, speaking in a low tone.

Lummers motioned toward the reception room and Jim disappeared. "How is it going?"

"Oh, fairly," Willetts answered. "Have you sounded the old man?"

Lummers shook his head. "I've been thinking it over since I saw you," he said, "and I've come to the conclusion that you'd better open this deal yourself."

"What's the matter? Knees weak?"

"No," said Lummers, "but the fact is, I'm too close to him. He knows me too well. You set the ball rolling and I'll try to keep it going."

"Um," Willetts grunted. "You are dead sure about this, are you? I've worked with him a good deal, you know, but on nothing very heavy. If I could get him into a poker game I'd know his character better. He doesn't always seem to be the same. Are you sure he won't shy at the cars?"

"Not if there's anything in the cars he wants," Lummers replied.

"How much do you think it will take to fix this end of it?"

"Well," said Lummers, "the Governor isn't down here for his health. I've never known a case where he didn't want all he thought he could get."

This threw Willetts into a state of reflection. "That's just the trouble," he said. "And if the old man gets a glimpse of our hands he'll blow us out of the pot. And, say, not a word about the ore deposits. Let him believe, with the rest, that it's nearly all swamp."

"Yes," said Lummers, "it's all right to let him believe anything he— There's the Governor," he broke off, as a door in the private office slammed. "You'd better not be found here," he added, "come in after a while. It will look less suspicious. And remember when you do get at him, no sparring— straight from the shoulder."

Willetts vanished and Lummers returned to his desk and was busy with papers when the Governor entered.

"Good morning, good morning," was the old man's brisk greeting, as he took his accustomed seat at a flat top desk almost in the center of the room.

"Good morning, Governor," responded Lummers, striving to give an innocent inflection to his

voice. He placed a number of letters and documents upon the Governor's desk and returned to the place where he was wont to sit in dull obscurity, ignored by politicians and overlooked by the average lobbyist.

The Governor sat for a time, musing. From the walls there looked down upon him the portraits of Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, the fiery Calhoun and the old Missourian who wrote "Thirty years in the American Senate." Delicious perfumes floated in from the neighboring gardens.

He took up a letter. "Ah—um," he said, "was old man Francis here to see about that pardon for his son?"

"Yes, sir," Lummers replied, "he called yesterday after you left."

"Well," added the Governor, reading a letter, "how much did he say they'd scraped together?"

"He thought he could raise about twenty-two hundred," Lummers answered.

"Twenty-two, eh?" echoed the Carpetbagger, shaking his head. "Well, I don't see how that boy can be innocent for less than five thousand."

At that moment a card was brought in. It bore the name of James Hill, and in pencil were written the words: "Don't know you, but must see you for your own good." The man was admitted. He was dressed in a long black coat, shining with wear.

"Sit down," said the Governor. "Now," he added, "come to the point as soon as you can."

"Yes, sir. I am of a type of men——"

"I know your type all right. Go ahead."

"I beg your pardon."

"Granted, go on."

"But I must get at it in my own way, sir. I am of a type which bobs up on certain occasions and then bobs out of sight forever. You may never see me again."

The Governor's eyes began to twinkle. "You alarm me," he said. "It is sad to chop off a pleasant acquaintance so abruptly. But your business?"

"Yes, sir. In my nature there is an abhorrence of bloodshed."

"You surprise me," said the Governor. "How did that happen?"

"Born that way. I have called to warn you."

"Against what?"

"An assassin, who would take your life."

"Did you bring him with you?"

"I am serious, sir. I heard this man swear that he was going to have your blood."

"Not all of it, I hope."

"He is going to shoot you on sight. Pull down your curtain. Don't expose yourself at night. That's all."

"Much obliged to you," said the Governor.

"Not at all. And now, I have a favor to ask."

The Governor's eyes began to twinkle again. "Go ahead."

"I understand that a member has been expelled from the house. I want his place."

"Hm! What qualifications do you possess?"

"Intelligence and devotion to duty. I would serve you well. I am an honorable man."

"So I see. You want me to put you in the house—to order a special election from an out-of-the-way county and declare you elected. Is that it?"

"Well, yes, sir; that is about it."

"My friend," said the Governor, "I am about as well acquainted with rascality as the majority of men. I like the average rascal. But I am afraid you are a little over-drawn. Get out of here—just as quick as you can."

"If I go out, sir, I shall leave you to your fate."

"Well, do it. Who is it, Jim?"

"Mr. Willetts, sah."

As Mr. Hill passed out Willetts stared at him.

"Governor," began the lobbyist, "there are times——"

"Yes, I know that; but what is it?"

"There are times when a man ought to be particular. This is one of them. How did that fellow manage to get in here? He's the worst man in the community. He was a deserter from both sides during the war and was convicted for stealing cotton."

"Since the war?"

"Yes."

"What a thief! Of course it's another matter if he stole it during the war. What's up?"

"Governor," said Willetts, "I am interested in a house bill introduced the other day. It provides——"

"Ah, ha!" the Governor exclaimed, reading from a letter he had just opened. " 'Unless you abdicate that office and leave the state within a week I will shoot the top of your head off.' The top of my head. Not the side or the bottom—just the top. That's generous." He crumpled the letter, threw it into a waste-paper basket and nodding at his visitor said: "Go ahead."

Willetts sighed, glanced over at Lummers and continued: "The bill provides for a right of way and land grant of about two-hundred thousand acres—um, mostly swamp—to the Midland railway company?"

The old man glanced up quickly. "What's that?" he said. "What railroad?"

"Well, the corporation, Governor, as yet has not been completely organized."

"Um—that's mostly swamp, too, is it?"

Willetts hesitated. The Governor continued to

read his letters. "Well, go ahead," he commanded, and then, addressed himself to a letter: "'Will shoot you on sight.' Signed 'John Pardue'." He turned to Lummers. "Who's John Pardue? Didn't we get a letter from him some time ago?"

"I think we did, sir," Lummers answered.

"Well, if John can't shoot any better than he writes he couldn't hit a prairie set up on edge." Then, turning to Willetts, he added: "Go on, sir; go on."

Willetts again essayed to explain the scope of the bill, though now in rather a disappointed way. "This road," he proceeded, "will be a good thing for the state in every way. It will build up towns and serve as a commercial highway for a very rich section of country——"

"Mostly swamp?" the Governor interrupted, looking up, with droll humor.

The lobbyist wavered. He felt the cold gray eyes of the Governor boring through him and knew that equivocation was hopeless. But he made a bold rally.

"Well, yes," he said, "on the left it is pretty much swamp. But over here," he added with a motion of his hand, "you see, it cuts off two hundred miles of unnecessary river transportation—and, well——"

"I see," said the Governor.

"In fact," continued Willetts, with forced impressiveness, "it will be a mighty good thing—for all of us."

The Governor glanced at him. "Who's 'us'?"

"Well, all of us, you know."

"Yes, I know," the Governor admitted, "but what part of the 'us' am I?"

This staggered the lobbyist for a moment but he rallied his faculties. "Financially, Governor," he said, confidentially, "that word shall be spelled with a capital YOU."

"Spread your scheme," said the Governor, turning again to his letters. "'Has left this county for the capital'," he proceeded, reading aloud, "'and I have cause to believe that he means bodily harm to you'. Lummers, who is Nat Robey? Ever hear of him?"

"I've heard that he is a desperate character, sir," said Lummers, turning in his chair.

"Hm!" remarked the Governor. "The Sheriff of Dixon county says that Mr. Robey is on his way down here. By the way, isn't he the fellow that Jim disarmed out there the other day? Jim!" he called.

"Yas, sah," Jim answered, stepping into the room.

"You took a gun from a man out there the other day. Wasn't his name Robey?"

"Who, dat generman wid de yaller ha'r? Naw, sah, his name was Mr. Crane."

"I thought the yellow-haired fellow was Rutherford."

"Naw, sah," said Jim, brightening with the self-compliment of his own recollection, "Mr. Rutherford wuz de generman whut come wid a thing wid a fuse in it an' tried ter set it afire in de house."

"All right," said the Governor, waving him back to his post.

"Governor," cautioned Lummers, "you ought to be more careful."

"You ought not to take such chances, Governor," Willetts spoke up.

"Go ahead with your land grant," said the Governor, taking up another letter.

Willetts again proceeded: "The bill, as I said, has been introduced, and after the first reading has been referred to a committee. I think it will be reported favorably, but it may require a little—attention—on our part."

"Um-yes," said the Governor. "Astonishing, isn't it, how much hard work is sometimes required to accomplish a—praiseworthy—object?"

Willetts sighed. "I could wish," said he, "that you seemed a little more interested."

"Interested!" the Governor exclaimed. "Why, I am tickled to death with it. Go ahead."

Jim stepped into the room and holding out a telegram toward Lummers said: "Anudder one deze yaller letters, sah." Lummers handed the telegram to the Governor, who tore it open and read aloud: "Jasper, Hilliard County, April sixth: Newly appointed sheriff assassinated last night by KuKlux."

"Lummers," he said, "order two companies of militia quartered in the town." Then he addressed Willetts: "If I understand you this land is for a railroad—a road, in fact, much needed by our people."

"Yes, sir," said Willetts, brightening, "one that will greatly benefit the state."

"Um," the chief executive grunted, "yes. Has it occurred to you that on occasions of this sort I sometimes am the state?"

"Well," Willetts drawled, "not exactly in that light, but, perhaps—"

The Governor broke in upon him: "How much will the state be benefited? In that light—how much?"

Willets reflected. "Would the state regard thirty thousand dollars as sufficient benefit?" he asked.

The Governor turned to Lummers. "Issue an order for the arrest of James Strickland, of Marionville, and have him brought to this city." Proceeding to read another letter he remarked for the benefit of Willetts: "When the state is very busy it can

scarcely afford to divert its mind into other channels for so small a sum. To give—er—conscientious attention, the state must be better paid."

Willetts leaned towards him. "Say fifty thousand."

"Ah," exclaimed the executive. "The state's ear is a little warmer toward that proposition. Say fifty —when the bill is signed. What's been done? Any opposition?"

"Well, yes, of course there's a little. Representative Felton says—"

"Felton, eh? He has been trying to get an appointment for his son-in-law. Leave Felton to me."

"The only real element of strength brought against us," added Willetts, "is Wiley Jones."

"Jones," mused the Governor. "Wiley Jones—yes, of Spencer county."

"Well," said Willetts, "he lives down the river a short distance from here, but he represents Spencer county."

"I understand," the old man replied. "Let's see,

wasn't his election contested? I sided in his favor —before all the facts were known, you understand," he said with a wink. "Additional evidence might render it necessary to reopen Mr. Jones' case. You go to him—yourself—and tell him I want to see him here right away."

CHAPTER IV

THE ALLIGATOR BOY

Above the door leading to his private office the Governor had placed a bust of Lincoln and many a time, in the midst of his threatening letters and the manifold annoyances that beset him, he would turn to gaze upon it, Dishonor contemplating the emblem of Honesty. At such times even the dull-minded Lummers could fancy a struggle in the mind of his master. But the struggle, if at all, was ever brief. Vice often pays silent homage to virtues it will not emulate.

When Willetts left the room the Governor turned to the bust, his face serious, a letter crumpled in his hand. Suddenly he looked at Lummers as if he felt the intrusion of a stealthy gaze.

"Well, what is it?"

"Nothing, sir," Lummers replied.

"What were you looking at me for?"

"I didn't—didn't know I was looking."

"Um, you didn't? Well, see that you know when you're looking after this."

"Yes, sir."

The young man's humility touched him. "I didn't mean anything by that, Lummers," he said. "It was a joke. What do you do with your money, anyway?"

"I send it home, sir."

"That's right, take care of it. There'll come a time when it will not be so easy to get. I'm going to raise your salary."

"I am very much obliged to you, sir."

"For the advice or the increase of salary?"

"For—for both," Lummers stammered.

"All right. But let me tell you, the advice is worth most."

He took a paper out of a drawer and began to read. After a time he put it down and fell into a deep muse. In the air there was a suggestion of a change in the season, and his mind flew back to a time when he worked on a farm in Illinois. He

looked at the palm of his hand as if to trace the reminder of a day of heavy labor. His life had been hard, a waif bound to an exacting farmer. When the boys of the South, recently his foemen, had danced rapturously with the negroes in the quarter; when, at Christmas time, they had come home to be worshipped as the heirs of a great baron, he had gone at daylight to the barn to milk the cows. How well he remembered the creak of the frozen door, the farmer's scolding, the cheerless breakfast! And there above the door were the stern features of one whose boyhood, like his own, had been a span of toil and deprivation. "But he came to save the sons of a down-trodden race," he said aloud, and Lummers looked up. Just at that moment Jim was heard, outside.

"Say, hol' on dar, lady, you kain't go in dar' lessen you's 'nounced."

"The idea!" came a voice in reply. "Go 'way from here, you impudent thing!" and then Nellie came bounding into the room.

"Why, hello! hello!" cried the Governor, brightening. "What are you doing down here?"

She ran forward, gave the Governor a hearty kiss and took a seat opposite him. "Is this chair for me? I've been here nearly two weeks and you've promised me every day you'd bring me down to see the state house and you haven't done it. So I've just come myself." She reached over and took up a paper. "What's this?"

The Governor gently took it from her. "Never mind."

"But what is it?" she insisted.

"Something that doesn't concern you. It's a pardon."

"For a man?" she cried. "What did he do? Kill somebody?"

"Worse than that," said the Governor, smiling.

"Worse than that? How many did he kill? A whole family?"

"No, he stole a horse."

"The mean thing! Did he beat the horse?"

"Beat the horse's owner, I guess."

Lummers came forward to place some papers on the desk. The Governor, glancing at one of them,

asked: "What is Senate bill 147? Oh, I see, a change in the Bolivar county line. All right." He signed the paper and handed it back to Lummers, who, glancing at the visitor, returned to his desk, leaving the executive with his letters. Several dingy portraits upon the walls soon became the objects of Nellie's inquisitive regard. "Why don't you have some prettier pictures here?" she asked.

"Don't blame me for those things," was the reply. "They were here before I came."

"But who are they?" she insisted.

"Statesmen."

"Where are they now?"

"I don't know—they're dead."

"What! All of 'em dead?"

"Very—that's why they are statesmen. If they were alive, they'd be politicians."

There was a brief interval of silence and then the young woman broke in ecstatically, "Oh, I've been having the loveliest time down here!" she cried. "I've had more fun here in two weeks than I ever could have in that old Chicago school. But I've

met some of the funniest folks. Aren't they odd? One old woman laughed at me because I said you used to be the best auctioneer in Chicago. But you were, weren't you?"

"I guess that's so," said the Governor, with a chuckle.

"But I don't like the girls very well," Nellie went on. "And stuck up! One of them said you stole this office." She glanced about the room. "You didn't, did you?"

"Nonsense," said the Governor, laughing.

"But how did you get it?"

"Well," said the Governor, his eyes twinkling, "the other fellow moved out and I moved in."

"They call you a 'carpetbagger'," she continued, with a suspicious quiver in her voice. "They say you are 'only a carpetbag governor.' Is that anything so—so—awfully bad?"

He wheeled about in his chair and looked full upon her. There was a hard, stern look in his face and his hands opened and closed nervously. She was the one object on earth whom he worshipped;

he could have throttled anyone who would cause her pain. For the first time the unpleasant truth was brought home to him that his own deeds and misdeeds, his reputation, would descend as a heritage to his daughter.

"Don't mind them," he said, huskily, as he arose to his feet and strode angrily up and down the room. "Don't mind anything they say. They don't like us very well down here. You are merely visiting the plundered camps of the enemy, my dear; that's all."

"Who plundered them?" she inquired, innocently.

The Governor winced. "The fortunes and misfortunes of war,' he said. "Don't you bother your pretty head about me. And don't you let them worry you, either," he added, his resentment rising. "If they tell you I am an interloper here, say to them that the supreme power of this nation has set me here and placed in my hands the authority of a czar. If they say that the only wealth I brought to the state of Mississippi was an empty carpetbag tell them that I came here with a full cartridge-belt."

The Governor's tall form, swayed by emotion, was drawn up to its full height. His eyes were blazing. In his voice there was the defiant intonation of a wounded animal at bay. A moment later he sank into his chair, turned to his desk and picked up a letter.

"Don't mind them," he said calmly.

"I won't," replied Nellie, with a toss of her curls. "Only this morning I told Roy you'd make it pretty hot for somebody if you ever heard —"

"Roy? Who's Roy?"

"Oh, I forgot. You don't know Roy, do you? Well, he's awfully nice. He lives in that big stone house just across the wall from us."

"Doesn't the Widow Fairburn live there?"

"Ah, ha. He's her son. Don't you know her?"

"Well, yes—when I see her. The fact is, you know, I've been so busy since I came here that I haven't had very much time for society."

"Well, he's awfully brave. He wants to be a captain in the army and go out West to fight Indians. That's one of the reasons I'm down here now."

"Why? Because he wants to fight Indians?"

"No, because he wants to be a Captain. I told him you'd get it for him."

"Get it for him!" exclaimed the governor with a smile. "Why, he'd have to go through West Point first."

"Oh," she said, "he wouldn't care about that. He'd just let that part of it go."

"Ah! He'd be willing to waive West Point, would he? That's generous."

"Ah, ha," she cried, nodding her head. "Oh, come! Get it for him. I told him you would. And really, I'm under the greatest obligations to him."

"What! So soon?" exclaimed the Governor.

"Soon! Why, it isn't so soon. He's been awfully kind to me. And he gave me just the loveliest alligator you ever saw. So long." She put her fingers on her arm to measure the length of the reptile.

"Gave you a what?"

"Ah, ha," she rattled on, "and it's just the sweetest thing. You ought to see how cute he shuts his eyes."

"Where is he now?"

"Out there," she answered, pointing toward the reception room.

"Jim," the Governor called, "bring in that alligator."

"Oh, no," Nellie cried. "It's Roy."

"Well, where's the alligator? I'm interested in him now."

"He's up in your room, with the cat and the parrot and Bulger," meaning by the latter as ugly a bull-dog as ever sniffed about the portals of a livery stable.

"In my room, eh? Any room up there for me?"

Nellie laughed. "Well, you'll have to take your chances."

"Um! That's what I've been doing ever since I came here."

"But really," the girl continued, returning to her benefactor, "he's been ever so kind to me. And you ought to see him eat flies!" she cried, with enthusiasm.

"What! The boy?"

"No—the alligator."

"Oh! And the boy is out there? Have him come in."

"He can't come in. The black man won't let him."

"And he's going to be an Indian fighter, too?"

"Well," she pouted, "Indians are different."

"Are they? We'll see. Jim," he called, "show in that young Indian fighter."

Roy appeared, gorgeous in a uniform that looked as if it had been made for the drum major of a country brass band.

"Come in, Roy," the girl cried. "It's all right!"

The Governor looked at him in astonishment. "Um! Good morning, Bub," he said, with assumed gravity. "Are you the alligator boy?"

The young fellow bristled up. "No, sir; I'm not an alligator boy. I'm a gentleman and a soldier."

"There!" exclaimed the girl, clapping her hands.

"Where's your command?" the Governor asked.

"Well, I haven't got one—yet," the boy replied.

"Hm!" ejaculated the Governor, quizzically inspecting the youngster's nondescript clothing.

"That's fortunate. Where did you get that uniform?"

"This is something I planned myself," was the proud reply. "Do you think it's all right, sir?"

The Governor laughed. "Well, I should say so. But what is it, anyway? What does it mean?"

After a moment of bashful hesitancy, the young man again found his voice. "It means just this," he said. "Every fellow in this town who amounts to shucks went into the army a private and came out a colonel or a lieutenant or a major or something. They wouldn't let me go. I was too young. So I had to stay at home and look after mother, and now when everyone is talking about Bull Run and Shiloh and Manassas Junction and Gettysburg, where do I come in? Do you think I'm going to be a dummy right through life just because father and mother didn't begin housekeeping early enough? I want to fight. I want a chance to show the stuff I am made of. I want a commission in the army. Nellie says you will get me one. Will you?"

The Governor arose. "I salute you, sir," he said.

"But I don't know just how I should address you. Your epaulettes tell me you are a general; your chevrons say you are a sergeant; your buttons that you are a colonel; your sash—I am not on to—and your braid says you are a drum major. We'll have to compromise this some way, won't we—eh—Captain?"

The Governor gave a military salute, which Roy returned awkwardly.

"Is he a captain now?" inquired Nellie. "Oh, goody! Come on, Roy!"

"Wait! "exclaimed the old Carpetbagger. "My daughter tells me you have been very kind to her. I want to thank you. She also informs me that you have an ambition to slaughter Indians."

"Yes, sir; if you please."

"Why? Indians ever do you any harm?"

"N—no, sir—never had a chance. Would if they could."

Lummers stepped forward and placed another paper on the Governor's desk. "Here's a matter," said he, "that ought to be looked into to-day. It's up for passage to-morrow."

"Yes; all right," and then turning to Nellie, he added: "I'm afraid I'll not have time to show you over the state house to-day. But some other time—"

"Let me do it!" Roy exclaimed. "I know every inch of it."

"Oh, will you?" cried Nellie, clapping her hands.

The Governor saluted him. "Thank you—Captain."

Nellie seized Roy's hand and they scampered off, the Governor looking after them with a smile. Calling Jim and motioning toward the private office, he said: "Bring in the heavy artillery."

"Yas, sah," the negro replied, with a chuckle, hastening out as if the execution of the command required the utmost speed. The Governor resumed the work of examining his papers. "More trouble," he mused. "Coming up like dandelions after a spring rain."

Jim entered with a demijohn and a glass. "Dis yere is a mighty powerful dockyment," he said.

"What's that?" the Governor demanded. "How do you know?"

"I ain't sayin' nuthin', sah."

"Well, see that you don't."

"Dat's whut I's doin', sah, jest ez fas' ez I kin—dat's whut I's yere fur."

The Governor swung the demijohn over his shoulder and poured out a drink. Holding up the glass he looked at it for a time. "Lummers," he said, "leave it alone. It's as bright as the sunshine in the corn-fields of old Illinois. But it's a treacherous mixture—the laughter of the fool, the sigh of the philosopher and the tear of woman."

Jim stepped forward and handed him a card. He glanced at the name, put the demijohn on the floor and the glass of whisky, untasted, on the desk. "Lucy Linford—Linford," he repeated, still looking at the card. "Sounds as if she might have just stepped out of a dime novel—yellow back, maybe."

"I dunno, sah," said Jim. "She ain't turned round yit."

"Show the lady in."

CHAPTER V

OLD STEVE'S MISSIONARY

There was barely time enough to hide the glass of whiskey beneath the desk and to jam the demijohn into a wastebasket, covering it with paper, before a tall young woman was ushered into the room. She came with a swish, a smile and a dash—a dainty bit of newest fashion, graceful, bright and handsome.

The Governor bowed. "Won't you be seated, Miss?" he said, motioning to a chair. Then, as if afraid he had made a mistake, he added, looking again at the card, "Or Mrs.?"

"Thank you," the caller replied, seating herself. "Either one—just as you please."

The old Carpetbagger gave her a quick, penetrating glance. Then he looked at Lummers significantly. "Very well," he said dryly. "If there's no difference we'll make it 'Miss'."

She smiled and handed him a letter. "Ah," he exclaimed, reading, " 'Stephen Parker.' What's old Steve doing now? Oh, I see, president of the Great Western Book Company. Yes. I've known old Steve a good many years—used to run a second-hand book store in Cincinnati; dealt largely in damaged literature. I auctioned off a car-load of his stuff once. We used to sock literature into Chicago in job lots in those days—baled it and sold it throughout the West by the ton."

She smiled at him. "As you see, Mr. Parker is now in the publishing business."

"Um, yes. Well, Steve always was a hustler."

"School books," she added.

"Ah, are you selling school-books?"

"Oh, no; but I'm here on a similar mission."

"Ah, ha. Well, this ought to be a pretty good missionary field."

"Yes," she admitted, throwing off a grace, which the Governor caught with humorous gallantry. "I understand," she went on, " that your legislature is about to pass a public school law, which provides

for the building of school houses in all parts of the state." She paused to throw off a few more graces. "And of course, school houses without school books, you know, would be a foolish expenditure."

"Hm!" ejaculated the Governor, the true light beginning to break upon him. "And your missionary scheme is—"

"Books. Our firm is regarded as the leader in all the advanced educational movements of the day. We want to join hands with the state of Mississippi and, under this law, provide all the text books needed to carry forward this grand reform movement."

"At what price?"

"Well, we have felt that if we were given the exclusive right to furnish text books for all the schools of this state for, say five years, perhaps some—arrangement—could be made by which it would not be absolutely necessary to mention prices in the law at all."

"Who would fix the prices?"

"Oh, that needn't stand in the way. We could do that."

The Governor looked at her curiously. "We?" he repeated.

"The company."

"Oh, the company. I see. The seller could fix the prices."

She slightly inclined her head. "Of course we expect to pay for the right to—"

"You merely want to save the consumer all trouble and worry about what he shall pay."

The caller laughed. Sitting as she was in a light now unmistakably true the Governor tapped a bell upon his desk. The negro appeared. "Jim," he said, "another glass." Then he grabbed the demi-john out of the basket and took his glass of whisky from its concealment. "Even missionaries," he continued, "are sometimes not averse to this sort of spiritual revival."

"Oh, Governor," the woman protested, "I never drink."

"Why, of course not, but—"

"Well, just a little, then—just the least bit."

He poured out a drink that would have jolted a

deck-hand, looking at her with a quizzical smile. She tossed off the liquor without a ruffle in her countenance. The Governor, after a moment of surprise at her calm ability to swallow the heroic draught, followed her example, and then asked: "Got a sample?"

"Oh, no more for me," she protested.

"I mean have you got a sample of your books?"

"Oh, yes," she replied, handing him a volume. "Here is our fifth reader." He took the book and began to examine it. "You observe," she went on, "that it is splendidly bound. The type is large and clear. The paper is high-class, and the book is well-made, substantial, and—"

"That's bad," the Governor broke in. "For the publishers, of course. Don't wear out soon enough, do they?"

Old Steve's agent laughed. The Governor continued to examine the book, turning the leaves as if looking for something. "Ah," he exclaimed, "but where's 'Rienzi's Address to the Romans'? This isn't like my old book. Where is 'It was Saturday

night and the widow of the pine cottage sat by her blazing faggots with her five chattering children at her side'? Remember that? What's become of that touching inquiry, 'What is that, mother? The lark, my child'? What have you done with 'It snows! cries the school-boy'? Where's 'He never smiled again'? Remember 'The bark that held the Prince went down'? Where's that?"

This was a criticism which the agent had not expected, though it was only the natural fault-finding of a man who had studied old McGuffey. But no great strain had been put upon her resources, so she smiled as she replied: "If you examine a little closer you will find other selections more modern, more advanced, more beautiful."

"More beautiful!" the Governor exclaimed. "What could be more beautiful than 'We must educate, we must educate or we must perish'?"

"That's our platform precisely," she cried. "You have struck the vital issue. Only you take a sentimental view of education; we look at the matter in a more—practical—light."

The Governor was about to reply when Jim stepped forward and handed him a card. He glanced at it, seemed surprised, and then said: "Show the lady in." He swept the demijohn and glasses from the desk, a fact which Miss Linford did not fail to heed, and turned to meet a tall, attractive woman dressed in black—a woman with the grace of the Old South in her walk.

"The Governor, I presume," said the lady, slightly bowing.

"Mrs. Fairburn," the Governor returned, with a show of courtesy that was not lost upon the book agent. "We have been neighbors for some time, I believe." Mrs. Fairburn slightly inclined her head. "Won't you be seated?"

"Thank you," she said, "I prefer to stand. Governor, a company of your militia has been encamped upon my plantation at Gum Springs since early in February. May I ask why those soldiers are there?"

"Gum Springs," echoed the Governor. "Lummers, who is at Gum Springs?"

"Captain Collins, sir, with Company H."

"Um—yes. What's he doing there?"

"Nothing, sir, at present."

"Pardon me," interrupted Mrs. Fairburn, with a tinge of irony in her voice, "but couldn't Captain Collins do that just as well somewhere else for a while?"

There was something in her demeanor which commanded respect and challenged admiration. The Governor mentally compared the two women before him. "He shall be given a chance to try, Madam," he said, "if you desire it."

The caller bowed. "Thank you, not only for myself, but also in behalf of my servants, my fruits and my fowls. Peace has its terrors as well as war."

"I'm sorry if they have bothered you," spoke up the executive, "but I don't blame them. Foraging is as much a part of the soldier's trade as fighting."

"But the fighting is ended. Is the foraging to be made perpetual?"

A shadow darkened the old man's face. "Send the soldiers away, Lummers," he said.

"Where, sir?"

"Anywhere—send them away."

"A few nights ago," continued Mrs. Fairburn, "during a drunken carousal, they burned the old school house at Gum Springs—a landmark dear to every one in that neighborhood. To replace it, of course, would be impossible; but cannot the state provide a new building, however small, so that the children there may receive instruction?"

Miss Linford had been an attentive listener. "That's right, Governor," she interposed. "It is clearly the duty of the state to replace that school house."

The Governor gave her a knowing look. "Um, yes," he said, sarcastically, "the more school houses the more books." Then he turned to Mrs. Fairburn. "That matter, Madam, shall be attended to at once. I think the state can find five thousand dollars for such use."

"I thank you, sir," said Mrs. Fairburn.

"Oh, not at all." Stepping aside he said in an undertone to Lummers, "Give the contract to Wilson and see that there's an extra five thousand in it for me."

"And there's another matter," Mrs. Fairburn continued. "But I'm afraid that I shall tax your patience." She stopped; the Governor bowed and, thus encouraged, she proceeded: "A young man named Francis has been sent to the penitentiary from Gum Springs, charged with manslaughter. There seems no doubt that he was set upon by some drunken soldiers and acted clearly in self-defense. He has had no opportunity to employ counsel, but has been hurried to prison. His family declares that he has not had a fair trial. Friends are circulating a petition for his pardon. When it reaches you may I ask that you give the matter your careful attention? I know that boy, Governor, and he is a fine, manly young fellow."

"I am already looking into that matter, Madam," he said slowly, after a moment's hesitation. He thought of the report made by Lummers—that old

man Francis had scraped together but twenty-two hundred dollars to purchase his son's release. He was about to say something additional when Jim entered and announced the arrival of Wiley Jones.

"Ah, all right," cried the Governor, evidently relieved by the interruption. "Show him into my private room. Ladies, you'll have to excuse me."

"My mission is ended," said Mrs. Fairburn, "and I'll not trespass longer upon your time. Good morning."

"Good morning, Madam." He glanced at Miss Linford and hurried into his private office. The book agent arose hastily. "Just a moment, please." Mrs. Fairburn, at the door, turned about. "I am always interested in those who are alive to educational needs," the lobbyist continued, handing Mrs. Fairburn a card. "I am in that line myself; perhaps we might be mutually helpful in this direction." The agent inclined her head toward the Governor's office.

Mrs. Fairburn straightened up with dignity. "I do not understand you," she said.

"Well, it occurs to me that I might make it worth your while if you would push my scheme a little."

Mrs. Fairburn recoiled as if stung. She flashed one look of indignation at the book agent and extended the card, which she still held in her hand. Miss Linford made no attempt to take it; a second later it fluttered to the floor and the woman in black was gone.

CHAPTER VI

THE OLD MAN'S SWEAT-BOX

Governor Crance's private office was not large; in fact, its dimensions were rather cramped. Legislators and lobbyists who oftenest were summoned there for discipline commonly referred to it as "the old man's sweat-box." Once inside that tomb-like inclosure the visitor usually found himself face to face with Trouble, and there was no room for shifty maneuvering or evasion. It was a place for rapid-fire business at close quarters.

Wiley Jones had been there before and knew what to expect. He was a political degenerate, a man always looking for the winning side, a schemer with all the predatory instincts of the cat and the moral courage of the hyena. He was gaunt, grizzled, sharp-eyed and squeaky of voice, utterly without principle, but with a self-consciousness which he often mistook for virtue. Largely through

the Governor's influence he had become a quasi-leader in the house of representatives and this, in his own eyes, had greatly increased his importance.

When the Governor entered, he got up with a show of politeness; but immediately dropped back upon the chair. He knew that the Carpetbagger was gradually losing power and that so high-handed a career could not last long in America. This fact made him impudent and he boldly summoned defiance to his aid.

"Willetts said you wanted to see me," he snarled, giving the chief executive a sharp look.

"For just about one minute," replied the Governor, taking the only other chair in the room. "You are opposed to that Midland Railway bill, I understand."

"Well, I—that is—"

"Are you against it?"

"I can't say that I am in favor of it."

"Why?"

"I don't like it."

"What are your reasons?"

"Well, I don't think it would be a good thing for the state."

"Don't you?" said the Governor, calmly. "I do."

"We can't afford to go too far in these matters—just at this time. The people have certain rights which must—"

"Who made you the special guardian of the rights of the people? What do you know about the welfare of the state?"

"My duty, sir, as a legislator, requires me to—"

"It doesn't require you to argue with me at all. You are not here for that purpose."

"Well, will you please tell me why I am here?"

"Yes—you are here to do as I tell you."

"Isn't that rather—rather peremptory, Governor?"

"I hope so. Now, look here. I am interested in that bill. I want it put through; and it's going through. But I don't propose to talk about that. There is another matter which is much more interesting to you. Some of the people down in Spencer county are raising a howl about the manner of your

election. Perhaps you haven't heard of that. I believe there was some little irregularity about it, wasn't there? If I remember correctly you weren't seated in exactly the regular order, were you? I have been thinking, in view of the protests which have been coming in, that it might be as well to reopen the case. What do you think?"

The legislator shifted uneasily in his chair.

"The people, you know, have certain rights which must be respected," the Governor added.

Mr. Jones wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"If they demand this of me," insinuated the Governor, "what can I do?"

The leader of the house glanced nervously about the room as if seeking in vain an avenue of escape. Then he sprang to his feet.

"You are trying to browbeat me!" he shouted.

"Nonsense," remarked the Carpetbagger, quietly. "Do you think I would waste time like that? As a legislator there are certain duties which you owe the people; I understand that, of course. And as a

public official there are certain duties which I owe them. That's all there is of it. It's very simple. If they show me that you were not legally elected, or that you were irregularly seated, I shall have to throw you out and declare your seat vacant. What else can I do?"

"The house won't stand it, sir!"

"If you think it won't don't bet your hope of salvation on that proposition."

"It might have done so once; but it won't now. The situation has changed. This high-handed business will be tolerated no longer. Washington knows what you are doing and the Federal government will—"

The Governor interrupted him with a laugh. "I get news from Washington, myself, occasionally," he said. "By the way," he added, "I'd like to ask you a question. Have you got the idea into your head that you are an honest man? Discard that fallacy. Throw it away. It isn't in you to be honest. You can change the construction of many things; but it isn't easy to alter the moral makeup

of a bad man. An honest man may depart from the original plan and afterward return to it; but if the foundation itself is rotten you can't build a safe superstructure over it, no matter how you change the materials."

"This is outrageous."

"Maybe; but it's true. If I thought you had an honest motive in opposing that bill—or in opposing any other bill—I might hesitate to influence you. But you haven't. You don't know the meaning of honesty."

"You are insulting, sir."

"That depends. It's a pretty hard matter to insult a thief, Mr. Jones." He looked straight at the lawmaker and smiled to see him wince. "Sit down," he commanded. "The fellow they have picked out for your place would grace it, I think. He is bright, shrewd and active—quick to grasp a point. It wouldn't take a minute for him to see the great benefits of such a measure as the Midland bill. And, above all, he is loyal to his friends. That's a pretty good trait in a legislator—honor, you know, even among thieves."

He paused and lighted a cigar. There was a brief period of silence which was broken by Jones. "Governor," he said, in a whining falsetto, "I've never been disloyal—never. But we're all of us walking over a volcano here and we can't be too careful. The people are roused. They are rallying around Reynolds and unless something is done to stem the tide that is setting in against us, they'll swamp us at the polls."

"My friend," drily remarked the Governor, as he blew a cloud of tobacco smoke toward the ceiling, "it takes two things to make a vote effective. First, it must be cast. Second, it must be counted. I'm not afraid of a high tide."

He arose and walked slowly up and down the room leaving the lawmaker to his own reflections.

"As the leader of the house," began the latter, "I must—"

The Governor turned on his heel. "As the leader of the house," he interrupted, "you must be pretty careful to know just what you are leading. Look behind you once in a while. If you don't somebody may cut the string and let you walk on alone."

The Carpetbagger resumed his walk. "Delightful weather we're having, isn't it?" he drawled, with significant emphasis. "I suppose it makes you feel like getting out of the house."

Mr. Jones arose. "No," he said, extending his bony hand; "I never have spring fever."

The Governor put his hands behind him.

"See Willetts," he said.

CHAPTER VII

WHO DOES THE COUNTING?

"It looks as if our friend, the enemy, were going to have a pretty big convention, doesn't it?" remarked Governor Crance, one morning, a couple of weeks later, his question having in it more of a conclusion than an interrogation.

"Yes, sir," responded Lummers, as he placed a pile of letters before the chief executive. "The Democrats have been pouring into town ever since last night and to-day they size up more like a mob than anything else."

"Um—where's Willetts?"

"I haven't seen him this morning, sir."

"Look him up. Find him. Tell him to keep in touch with those fellows to-day and see what's going on."

"Yes, sir." Lummers seized his hat and started for the door.

"Tell him I want to see him if anything turns up," continued the Governor. "Have him report to me."

During the afternoon, the Carpetbagger remained in the seclusion of his office, apparently unmoved by the political excitement outside which kept the streets congested. From time to time he heard the sounds of fife and drum and the cheering of the multitudes. Once, a band of marchers, as if to bid open defiance to the Carpetbag regime, halted beneath his window and gave three cheers for "honesty and home rule."

He smiled. "Not just yet," he soliloquized. "But I don't blame 'em. If I lived down here I'd be out there, too. Chicago's always been good enough for me."

The school-book lobbyist called; but she found scant courtesy. "You're in too much of a hurry," he said. "I understand they are making a new Governor here in town to-day. Maybe you'll have to do business with him. Better wait and see."

Nellie and Roy came romping in—a ray of sunshine at the close of a murky day. "Has my com-

mission got here yet?" inquired the youngster, his face glowing with enthusiasm.

"Eh? How's that?" asked the Governor. "Oh—from Washington. I remember. No; not quite."

A moment later, Willetts, unannounced, bolted into the room. His face, usually pale and inexpressive, was flushed with excitement. Before he could say a word the old man stopped him with a significant gesture.

"Miss Linford," he said, "we'll have to take up your matter some other time. Good afternoon. Captain Fairburn, will you cover the retreat and see that my daughter reaches home in safety."

Roy saluted awkwardly and offered his arm to Nellie. As their footsteps died away the Carpetbagger turned to Willetts. "Sit down," he commanded.

"Governor, this thing means mischief," began the ex-gambler. "It's all very well for us to ignore the convention and call them kickers and soreheads, and ridicule their claims of reform; but I tell you that convention to-day has been red-hot from the start, and the people are behind it."

"That's all right," replied the Governor, coolly. "Who's in front of it?"

"Reynolds—and if you don't look out he'll run away with us. I know these people—I've lived here."

"Well, I guess Reynolds is the best they could do."

"He's the most popular man in the state. He can poll more votes than any man in Mississippi. Don't mistake that."

Major Reynolds had not sought the nomination, the honor having been forced upon him, and now the news was spreading throughout the city. He was the son of old John Reynolds, a veteran of the Mexican war, an old aristocrat who had been in Congress and who was still one of the largest land-owners in the state. The Major had been a gallant soldier in the Confederate army. His kindness and courtesy, his generosity and friendliness made him a favorite among the common people. In a piece of limping verse a sentimentalist had called him the "flower of chivalry." While Willetts and the Gov-

ernor were still discussing the situation, they heard the Major's voice in the ante-room. "Here!" he commanded, speaking to Jim, "take my card to the Governor."

"Reynolds!" cried Willetts, springing to his feet. "Look out now. Take care of yourself."

The Governor lighted a cigar. "He's only one man," he said. Jim handed him a card. "Show him in."

"Only one man," said Willetts, with his eye on the door, "but he's a hair-trigger man. No monkey-business, now. He won't stand it."

The Major stepped into the room, halted and bowed stiffly. "Governor Crance?"

"How are you, Major?" was the Governor's hearty greeting. "Sit down. How's everything, out your way?"

The Major started at this familiarity. "Governor Crance, my party has honored me with a nomination for Governor, and pursuing a custom time-honored among our people, I have called, sir, to announce my candidacy in opposition to yourself."

"Oh, that's all right. Sit down."

"And to demand, sir," the Major continued, "that you meet me on the stump, where you shall have full opportunity to defend yourself against the charges with which I shall confront you."

"Oh, I don't think that will be necessary at all," the Governor drawled. "Just turn the cat loose whenever you get ready."

The Major began to swell with indignation. "It may please you, sir, to indulge in vulgar flippancy at a time like this, but it does not meet the issue."

"Meeting an issue is all right, Major; but what's the use in breaking your neck trying to overtake one?"

"We charge you, sir, with most damnable corruption in office. You have plundered and pillaged this stricken state, intrusted to your keeping. You have oppressed our people. You have ruled without justice and without mercy. And against this record, sir, you must defend yourself."

The Governor smiled. "If I'm that sort of a fellow, why should you want to meet me anywhere? Even on the stump?"

"But I will meet you, sir, to wrest your stifling clutch from the throat of this prostrate commonwealth!"

"Good!" exclaimed the Governor. "You'd have made a great auctioneer. It wouldn't be safe, though, for me to meet you on the stump—I can see that. We might get excited and I probably would forget myself and auction you off. Why, I'd trot you up and down in front of the people a few times and knock you down to the highest bidder. Have a cigar?"

The Major, livid with anger, snatched the proffered cigar, broke it in two and throwing it upon the floor, trampled upon the pieces. Then, brushing his hands together, he said with evident effort:

"Sir, I shall not be diverted from my purpose by any personal indignity which you may see fit to inflict upon me. This issue is one which transcends personal considerations, and I do not forget that a sacred trust has been placed in my stewardship. But, sir, I warn you that the day of settlement is at hand. You may not meet me on the stump; but

you must face the outraged people of this sovereign commonwealth at the polls. And the people do the voting!"

The Governor had seated himself on a corner of his desk. He looked up with a smile.

"Do they?" he asked, innocently. "Who does the counting?"

CHAPTER VIII

THE GOVERNOR WIPES OUT A BLOT

Throughout the entire state there was a booming as of cannon. When Willetts first heard the uproar in the little capital city he rushed to the public square, half expecting to find it besieged by the enemy with field pieces. But, when he learned that the people were merely firing anvils in honor of the Major's nomination and knew that all the commotion was caused by the blacksmith's instrument of toil, he skulked back to his quiet scheming with the legislators. He argued, and with good reason, too, that there was no cause for alarm. The Governor's last words to Major Reynolds had settled the election; it could make no difference how strong a vote the Democrats might poll.

Every night there were speeches in the streets, in halls and in vacant warehouses. The ante-bellum orator had crept forth from his seclusion and

now broke his political silence to talk again of the "constitution" and the "rights of free-born American citizens." Old men, who long ago had given up all hope, acknowledged that the country might yet be saved. Ministers preached politics from the pulpit. In their arguments before juries the lawyers spoke of "Reynolds and freedom." A candidate for the legislature went about wearing a red ribbon with the words—"Who does the Counting?"—stamped upon it.

The Carpetbaggers went through the pretense of a vigorous campaign, though they knew that it was unnecessary, since the result lay with the returning board, appointed by the Governor. Every member of the legislature was a candidate for re-election. Few of them had ever visited the communities which they nominally represented. Wiley Jones had come back into the fold. It was known that the railway land-grant bill would pass at the proper time, upon the completion of financial arrangements in the East.

One day, while the Governor sat alone, in his

private office, there came a bird-like tapping upon the door. He arose with a frown, but his face brightened when he opened the door. Nellie stood there, as fresh as the dew on the magnolia bloom.

"Why! Come in, little one," he said; "come in."

"Are you glad to see me?"

"I'm always glad to see you. Sit down here. What have you been doing to-day? Making speeches for me?"

He looked at her tenderly—a pure bud in a thicket of briars, this beautiful image of a face gone from the world, the living replica of a country girl whom he had wooed and won long years ago among the flowers of the prairie.

"Yes, sir, I'm always making speeches for you."

"Um, I guess you are the strongest speech that could be made."

She was silent for a time and her face was thoughtful. So serious a look was new for her and the Governor asked if anything had gone wrong. She shook her head in denial. The Governor attempted to joke with her. She got up and put her arms about his neck.

"Why do they say such awful things about you?" she asked, with an unwonted quiver in her voice.

"Do—do they?" His face darkened.

"Yes, even the girls. They say—they say you are a thief. And how can they do that when you are so good and kind to everybody? You couldn't do anything wrong, could you?" Her arms were tight about his neck and her face was warm and soft against his cheek, a cheek beaten by so many storms. "Could you?"

He made an inarticulate sound. He tried to laugh, but his voice degenerated into a gasp. He strove to harden his eye, but it was soft. "You mustn't pay any attention to what you hear, little one," he said.

"Oh, but I can't help it! If you don't pay any attention to what you hear, what can you pay any attention to? It wouldn't be so bad for a little minute, but it's—all the time. Mrs. Fairburn said—"

"Eh? What about her?"

"She's awfully good to me, and she—"

"What did she say?"

"I don't understand her at all. I was over there this morning, and she said I was 'one of the sweetest little things she ever saw.' Then she put her arms around me and said, 'What a pity! What a pity!' What did she mean?"

The Governor gently took her arms from about his neck—they were suffocating him. He walked mechanically about the room, halting at the window to look out upon the flowers.

"What did she mean?" the girl asked again.

The old soldier turned about, master of himself. There was infinite tenderness in his heart, but a lie was on his lips. "It was her mother instinct,"—he said—"A pity, that you were motherless."

Jim came in with a card. It bore the name "Rev. Jacob Williams." The Governor glanced at it and hesitated. "Well," he finally said, "let him come in."

An old man entered the room. One glance of the Governor's shrewd eye established his honesty.

"Sit down, Mr. Williams. What can I do for you?"

"You can avenge a great wrong," the old man replied.

"What is it?"

"It involves the telling of a brief story, sir. But it shall be very brief. Not far from here there is a gambling house, and—"

"They are all over town," the Governor interrupted.

"I know it, sir; but it is of this especial one at 102 Mason Street, that I am here to speak. Into this house, for a long time, there has gone almost daily an old man to play what they call 'roulette.' He has always lost. Nearly every time he has stayed till a little boy came to lead him away. It was a pitiful sight. It was a joke among the wretches, who used to say: 'He'll stay till his policeman comes.' Yesterday he began to win. He had little money at the start, but soon ran the amount up to seventy-five dollars. Then, to the surprise of every one, he quit and demanded the cash he had won. They gave it to him, of course, but were loth to see him

leave. 'Give us a game,' they insisted. He turned upon them. 'Wolves!' he said, 'you have seen that little fellow come day after day and lead me away from here. This money'—and he shook it at them —'this money is to pay for his funeral.' He turned away and the brutes jeered him." The clergyman paused. "I have come, sir," he added, softly, "to ask that this hell may be closed."

Now the Governor's eye was hard. He looked at the tears on his daughter's cheek. He touched a bell. "Jim," he said, "if Mr. Willetts is anywhere about, tell him to come here."

"He's out dar now, sah."

The Governor said nothing, walking up and down the room till Willetts entered. Then he spoke in a voice strangely low for him: "Go to the chief of police," he said, "and tell him to close up 102 Mason Street. Not for a day, but for all time—wipe it out. Tell him to give the operators of the place two hours to get out of town. You don't need an order. Go."

"But, Governor!" cried Willetts, "ain't you a little

too fast in this matter? Just let me see you a moment." He drew the Governor aside. "That house," he said, confidentially, "is contributing more to our campaign fund than any institution in the city. We can't afford to close it. These men are perfectly 'square.' What's the charge against them?"

The Carpetbagger looked at his daughter.

"There isn't any," he said.

CHAPTER IX

THE GOVERNOR'S SUNDAY

All night a gentle rain had fallen; but the clouds floated away with the coming of dawn and the sun shone bright upon an ideal Sunday morning. Roses breathed their perfumed secrets upon the soft air; the local poet dreamed, and the music of the bells was sweet. The pathways leading to the churches were ablaze with ribbons, for the dammed-up finery, held back by the war, had broken loose and flooded society.

Governor Crance sat upon the broad veranda enjoying a cigar, while a steady stream of church-goers flowed past him. No one noticed him. Every eye was averted. "The forbidden earth," he mused, as he glanced about the spacious grounds, and his memory brought back the prosy sermons of long ago in the little white church of an Illinois hamlet.

"Aren't you going to church?" chimed a girlish treble, as Nellie came bounding out of the house.

"To church?" echoed the Carpetbagger, with a peculiar intonation in his voice. "No."

"Why not?"

"I—I—never go to church down here."

"What! Never go to church at all?"

The Governor shook his head. "The war taught both sides how to hate," he said. "Time alone can teach forgiveness."

"Well, the war ended two years ago," she persisted.

"The war did—the warfare didn't. We've quit shooting each other, it's true, but in a thousand ways the fighting is still going on, hotter than ever."

"But surely not on Sunday, and in the church."

"Everywhere—all the time. If I were to attend a church service to-day," he continued, "I should not hear the Gospel preached; I should merely hear myself abused. So I don't go."

Nellie's blue eyes filled with tears. For a few

minutes she stood motionless; then she slowly went back into the house. "Oh, I'm so sorry!" she said.

There was a queer lump in the Governor's throat. He sprang up as if to follow his daughter, stopped at the door, and after a little indecision, turned squarely about and walked down into the garden.

To and fro among the magnolias he paced, how long he did not know. He heard voices and the laughter of children and knew that the people were returning from church; but this did not interrupt his meditation. The greedy sun, now high in the heavens, had stolen every dewy jewel from leaf and flower and the grass was dry. He threw himself down at full length, closed his eyes and tried to shut out the world. He was aroused by a fluttering among the green leaves; a bird was building her nest in the branches above him and he watched her curiously. "She never goes wrong," he exclaimed, half aloud, "and yet she has only instinct to guide her. Mistakes are man's monopoly."

CHAPTER X

THE HIGH-HEADED WOMAN

Walking slowly back to the house, Governor Crance glanced toward the adjoining garden of Mrs. Fairburn and was surprised to see his fair neighbor engaged in gathering an armful of roses. He stopped. Unconsciously he raised his hat and did not replace it. He wondered if she would look at him; but she did not. Presently he grew bolder and cleared his throat to speak; but he found no opportunity to do so. Uncovered he stood there and looked at her, as one might gaze upon a rare painting by an old master. How queenly she looked amid the flowers! For many minutes he watched her in silence; then he saw her turn and saunter back toward the stone house among the trees. As she reached the veranda she threw down the roses and, as if urged by a sudden impulse, turned about deliberately and looked full upon him. He made

no sign, but a strange trembling seized him as he saw her again walking toward him.

"Governor," she said, coming close to the dividing wall, "I want to thank you for sending your soldiers away from my plantation at Gum Springs."

"You needn't," he replied, with an effort to appear unconcerned. "I had to keep them somewhere, it didn't matter much where. I'm glad to have been of service to you."

Mrs. Fairburn bowed. "Besides," he hastily added, as he saw her turn to leave, "I promised you I would."

Mrs. Fairburn stopped. "I am glad you have redeemed one promise," she said, with an emphasis upon the word "one", which the Carpetbagger did not fail to notice.

"Why 'one'?" he asked.

"You promised me you would look into the case of that Francis boy." Mrs. Fairburn replied, quietly. "Have you done so?"

The Governor winced. "I'm going to," he said, earnestly. "I give you my word—I will."

"Thank you."

"But you don't believe me, do you?"

"I shall be pleased to give you full credit for every creditable thing you do."

"Thank you," exclaimed the Carpetbagger, ironically, "but I am not certain that I ever do anything of that sort."

"You might."

"What good would it do?"

"It would do you good. No kindly act is ever lost, no matter whether the world knows it or not."

"That's what they used to say to me in Sunday school a good many years ago."

"You haven't heard it there lately, have you?"

"No. Why should I go to church? To hear myself abused? They all do it."

"Not all. I heard a fine sermon this morning in which you figured as a central character, and you were not abused, either."

"Indeed? Then the millennium must be at hand. Who did it?"

"Dr. Williams. He told us the result of his inter-

cession with you to close a certain gambling house that had ruined his brother's home."

"His brother?"

"Yes. Didn't you know?"

"No; but it would have made no difference. What was the text?"

"'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth'?"

"Um! What do you think about that question?"

"It was answered eighteen hundred years ago."

Her voice was low and as sweet as the music of a mountain brook. The Governor was deeply moved and his face betrayed the emotion he felt. Mrs. Fairburn was quick to see the effect of her words and deemed it a good time to drive home another truth.

"I suppose you will have work now for all your soldiers," she said. "The election is almost here."

"Why do you think that?" asked the Governor, abruptly. She took from her hair a bright red ribbon and held it up. "Can you read this?" she asked.

"Not from this distance," he replied. "But I can

guess what there is on it. 'Who does the counting?' "

"They say you intend to surround every voting place with a corporal's guard."

"Do they? How do they know?"

"You don't deny it. Governor, would not such a thing be a monstrous outrage upon our people?"

"The ballot boxes must be protected against rioting and disorder."

"If the result is already known, why hold any election at all? If you decide the election, why should anyone else take the trouble to vote? Should not the majority rule?"

There was an earnestness in her voice that the Carpetbagger did not like. He laughed, uneasily. "Well, I don't know about that," he said, with a forced attempt at pleasantry. "If the majority always ruled, the mosquitoes would govern New Jersey."

In spite of her seriousness the widow laughed, and the Governor, seeing that her reserve had been broken, followed up his advantage. The spirit of

the peaceful, restful sabbath day, he remarked, could not have been better exemplified than by a negro whom he had seen down the street, lying on a box, his face to the sun, his eyes closed, and an indolent tune oozing from his lips. Mrs. Fairburn laughed at his description of the fellow—the conceit of an indolent tune oozing from the negro's lips was odd.

"You seem to like flowers," he added, brusquely.

"I am very fond of them," answered Mrs. Fairburn. "Aren't you?"

"They are about the only things that are left me now to love," he said, "except Nellie—God bless her—and she's a flower."

"She's a charming girl," remarked the widow, warmly. "You ought to be proud of her. I've been gathering a few roses to decorate the house a little. To-morrow is Roy's birthday."

"He's a fine boy," said the Governor. "You ought to be proud of him."

CHAPTER XI

A SIGH AND A DRINK

A woman was coming up the street, a woman gay with ribbons and a gaudy parasol. Mrs. Fairburn was first to notice the newcomer's approach and made hasty preparations to retire from sight. To be seen talking with the arch enemy of the state would have been to compromise herself in the eyes of the community and she took instant flight. The Governor watched her, hurrying along the path leading to her house, and wondered if she would look back; but she did not and he turned away to his own garden where Nellie and Roy were laughing among the trees. The "soldier" was in a hammock and the girl was trying to shake him out. The Carpetbagger started toward them, but just then some one called his name. A woman stood at the front gate, and he hastened toward her; but there soon came a halting catch in his walk

for he recognized Lucy Linford, the school-book lobbyist. She had called to see him at the state-house several times since her first visit. Once in a laughing way he had referred to her as a "delightful temptation," and she had tried to blush, but failed. She was not of the sort that blushes successfully. But she was attractive and, as Willetts said, "for dash could give any of them cards and spades."

"I was just passing, Goyernor, and happened to see you in the yard."

"Yes. Won't you—won't you come in?"

"For a little minute, thank you. The sun is getting warm. Let us sit on the veranda."

She sat in a rocking chair and the Governor walked up and down, with an occasional glance over toward the stone house. Miss Linford was an illumination of smiles and bubbled with the music of laughter. He was half afraid of her, though he found a sort of tingling pleasure in his fear; but whenever he looked over toward the widow's house there came a graceful picture in his mind. Other women might be more beautiful, though he was

prepared to doubt it, but none could be so calm and peace-inspiring.

"Governor, have you—pardon me for mentioning it now—but have you thought any further of our school-book bill? I am so anxious to have something done."

"Well, it hasn't been keeping me awake at night," he replied, turning and walking toward her, only to pass and turn again.

"Oh, I wouldn't want it to do that—like a bad conscience. You must remember, however, that you gave me a good deal of encouragement the last time I had a talk with you."

The Governor was walking toward her again. "I always encourage every woman that talks with me," he said.

"Really?"

He saw her smiles and heard her musical laughter as he halted in front of her. He felt that she was "playing him"—he could not help but know it, but he liked it, as most men do. Some men, getting along in life, are never so happy as when a woman

is making a fool of them. And history proves that a statesman is as easy to fool as a minor. This woman had many a grace which she threw off with her fan. She had a way of spreading it before her face and peeping over it. Willetts was right. She could "give the most of them cards and spades."

"I received a letter from Mr. Parker the other day," she said; "and he spoke glowingly of you."

"Did, eh? Well, Steve can put it on when he wants to. He was a plasterer, I believe, before he began to deal in damaged literature."

"He was very much in hopes that we might get our bill through. It would mean so much to us all."

"Um—yes."

"And in my answer to his letter I should like so much to send him encouraging news." She peeped at him over her fan, her dark eyes full of the light of admiration for the man standing before her. She wore loose sleeves and he looked at her shapely arm, adroitly exposed for inspection. "What shall I tell him, Governor?"

"Who, old Steve?" The Governor was fencing with himself to gain time. "Why, er—tell him I'm still his friend."

"Is that all?"

"Isn't that enough?"

"I should like to tell him that our measure will surely carry. May I tell him that?"

"Yes—you may, but you'd better not. We'll have to feel the pulse of the House. The rascals aren't as —as tractable as they might be, nowadays."

"Mr. Wiley Jones will not oppose it. He's one of the most influential members and he's devoted to you."

"Um, yes, very devoted. Devotion is the heaviest part of Brother Wiley's character."

"He's very friendly, and he seems to be so conscientious. Don't you think so?"

The Governor laughed. Then he resumed his walk up and down the veranda. Presently he halted and stood looking over into the widow's yard, abstractedly. The woman in the rocking-chair knew what that meant just as well as if he had told her.

She bubbled with occasional merriment, just the same, and when he turned was bright with a smile. But how she hated the Fairburn widow! She had no reason to believe that the widow was opposed to her bill, except the intuition that flames out of a woman's instinct, which, after all, may be the strongest of reasons.

"Governor," said Miss Linford, "I'll not detain you any longer."

"Oh, you are not detaining me. I'm at—at home, you know."

They heard Nellie and Roy laughing. Miss Linford got up to go but stayed to remark that she had never seen a more charming girl than the Governor's daughter. She was so fresh, so full of innocent life. And she was as unconscious of her beauty as an oil painting. Her mother must have been a handsome woman. She had her father's eyes and her mother's yellow hair, evidently. The Governor hemmed, hawed and winked under this flattery, and, knowing that it was flattery, was 'Adam enough to like it. She finally swung herself

out of the gate, her bright colors leaving a rainbow glow in the air and the Carpetbagger, heaving a sigh of relief, went into the house and took a drink. Down the street, Old Steve's agent met Willetts, sauntering along with a small yellow cane. He raised his hat, assured her of the pleasant surprise afforded him and turned to walk with her.

"I've just left the Governor," she said.

Willetts smiled. "I suppose he promised to put your bill through," he remarked.

"No, but I think he will do it, just the same."

"He won't," said Willetts, laconically. "Your school-book bill is laid out. You're on a dead card and you may as well throw up the sponge. I know what I am talking about."

"Then what's the use of my staying here?"

"I'll tell you. Let's turn down this way where we'll be alone."

CHAPTER XII

HE MEETS A BULLET

On the following Tuesday the Midland Railway bill passed the Senate, having on Monday run through the smooth channels of the House, and was now ready for the Governor's name to make it a law. Financial arrangements had been perfected in the East and the money was sure. Shortly after the bill passed the Senate, Wiley Jones called on Willetts. The lobbyist lived in a suite of rooms not far from the state house. A negro was shaving him when Jones knocked at the door.

"See who it is, Zeb," said Willetts. He never called out "come in!" His door was always locked. The negro admitted Jones without asking a question, having done so time and again, and the legislator strode into the room.

"Willetts," said he, "I'd like to see you alone."

"Yes, just as soon as he gets through with me;

won't take long. Everything seems to be all right, doesn't it?"

"I don't know," growled Jones, sitting down.

The negro's work was soon done. As he tip-toed out of the room, Willetts locked the door and turned to Jones, who, without preliminary words, asked when he was to get his money.

"Why, just as soon as I get mine."

"And when will that be?"

"The company's agent will pay over the cash just as soon as the bill is signed."

"Suppose it is never signed?"

"Nonsense! That's fixed. You needn't worry about the old man."

"Well, I'm doing business with you, not with him. Nothing was said about waiting for his signature. Our deal called for the cash when the bill was passed—ten thousand, spot cash. I've done my work and put the bill through. Now I want the money."

"Don't be in a rush. This thing is safe enough. The bill, as it stands, isn't worth fifteen cents and it

is unreasonable to expect them to pay us anything before we deliver the goods."

"I've delivered mine."

"Well, you'll get your money when the rest of us do."

"What if somebody were to put a ball through the Governor to-night?"

"Oh, if the sky ever falls," rejoined Willetts, sarcastically, "we'll all of us have a fine time catching larks."

"All right," persisted Jones, "put it the other way; where would I be if you were accidentally to meet a bullet going in the opposite direction?"

"You'd be 'out' ten thousand, I guess. But what's the use of talking? You are as likely to run against a bullet as I am."

"And if I did, you'd simply pocket the money I have earned and no one ever would be the wiser for it. I want my pay and I don't propose to take any chances waiting for it, either. The legislature is on its last legs and the whole Carpetbag government is liable to explode any day. Have you seen the old man since the bill passed the Senate?"

"Of course not; I haven't had time. But I saw him yesterday after it passed the House."

"What did he say?"

"Oh, he didn't say much of anything. It wasn't a surprise to him; he expected it."

Willetts knew that the Governor was wavering, but he did not care to tell Jones. It was his habit to tell just as much as was necessary and no more. He could understand how a man might be coerced into softness, but why he should sink into it of his own accord was beyond his reckoning.

Jones sat for a time in deep thought. He was not afraid that the Governor would not sign the bill; he was not really uneasy as to his ten thousand dollars; but he was in a mood of self-condemnation for having accepted so small a part of the purchase money.

"Willetts," he said, "I've been too easy with you fellows."

"Been too what? I don't know what you mean."

"I sold out too cheap. I ought to get twenty-five thousand at least."

"Well, I like to see a man value his services, but sometimes there's danger of going just a trifle too far."

"Too far! You couldn't have done anything without me. I could have killed the thing if I'd wanted to."

Willetts laughed. "You would have killed yourself."

"That might be, but I could have let the life-blood out of that bill. And I ought to have more money."

"You agreed to take a certain amount."

"I know it; but you haven't paid me a cent yet. Let me tell you something. I'm going to have what is due me or you'll hear something drop. The story of that bill would make a good campaign speech. I could flop over to the other side just about now and make my peace for all time to come; and I can almost catch sight of the gubernatorial chair, down at the end of such a course. That's all." He strode out of the room and Willetts sat down to think.

Jones went to the House, listened for a time to the reading of a dull report, paired off with a man who lived near him, but who represented a county on the other side of the state, then mounted his horse and rode off down into the country. His house was some distance from the main road, and to reach it he had to ride round the plantation of Old John Reynolds. This was a waste of time for a busy legislator, so he had dropped into the habit of throwing down the old planter's fences and riding through his fields. Reynolds had his just prejudices against all members of the Carpetbag legislature; moreover his son was a home candidate for Governor. He was a good-natured man and did not at first let his temper get the better of him; but when the trespasser continued to throw down his fences, he grew furious. On the present occasion Jones was about mid-way of a field when the old man hailed him. The law-maker halted unwillingly and listened absent-mindedly to a warm rebuke. This made the old man more furious and he launched forth a threat. "Sir," said he, "if you

throw down my fence again and ride through my fields, I will shoot you." Jones was as corrupt a man as could be found, but he was not afraid, physically. Morally, of course, he was a coward; all corrupt men are. He grinned a defiance at the old planter and rode on. A few days later, he was not present at roll-call; which excited no comment, as negligence seemed part of the Carpetbag legislator's duty. Later, there was a commotion in the House when news was brought that Representative Jones had been found dead, near a gap in Old Man Reynolds' fence. He had been shot. It was known that Reynolds had threatened to shoot him. It looked like a clear case. A warrant was issued for the arrest of John Reynolds; a coroner's jury gave a verdict against him; he was taken before a justice of the peace for preliminary hearing and was bound over without bail to await the action of the grand jury and the criminal court. And his old wife went to jail with him.

Major Reynolds was out in the country, campaigning, when he heard the news of his father's

arrest. He learned also, that his mother was in jail; and there was but one conclusion—that the outrage had been engineered by Governor Crance, to blacken the candidacy of the people's idol. The Major was addressing a meeting when a man came upon the stand and whispered to him. He stood for a moment as if paralyzed, then he quietly said: "My good people, circumstances have called me back to the city." Without another word he rushed forth, sprang upon a horse and galloped off. A trusted lieutenant, a game man, Captain Pointer, rode beside him.

"We can't get there before to-night," said the Captain.

"No," the Major replied, "but we will get there."

"What then?"

"I am going to kill him."

"Of course, but how? It won't do to shoot him down. You must make him fight—if you can."

"Yes, if I can; and if I can't—"

They galloped on in silence. At a farm-house they halted to change horses. The farmer was busy

with his crops and said that he didn't see how he could accommodate the Major. He needed his horses for work. Why not rest a while? The Major explained that he was in a great hurry. The farmer didn't see the need of such a rush. The town would stay where it was, he said, and the campaign would keep. He was the Major's supporter, he added, and would do anything in reason for him—even make speeches for him; but he could not give up his horses at such a time—unless the case was very urgent. The Major looked at him. "I am going to town," he said, "to kill the scoundrel that calls himself the Governor of this state." The farmer turned and shouted to one of his men: "Sam, catch the black horse and the roan as quick as you can."

CHAPTER XIII

WHO RAISED THE DEVIL?

Willetts was in the House when the news of the Jones murder was received. Just at that moment he caught sight of Miss Linford in the lobby and hastened to her. They talked for a time, during the excitement, and discussed the probable effect of the old planter's arrest upon his son's campaign.

"I must go over to the preliminary hearing," said the gambler. "I want to see how the thing goes."

"Do you really think that the old man killed him?" she asked.

"No doubt of it. Wiley told me not long ago that his life had been threatened, and I warned him; but he was always headstrong when there wasn't any need to be." They had walked out and were going down the steps. "By the way," said he, "we must see the Governor. Go with me up to his house to-night. I'll need you."

That night they called at the executive mansion. Jim admitted them to the reception room. "You'll hab t' wait here a minute," said the darkey. "De Gub'nor is up sta'rs in de liberry." He went slowly up the broad stairway.

"Now remember," said Willetts, "if you get a chance, nail him. Never let him get away—you can do it."

Lucy Linford looked at him. There were no smiles for him. With him she was natural, sober —and a woman's nature is usually sober. Her frivolity is nearly always a pretense. She may rave over foolish things, but at heart she is practical. She looked at him and replied: "All right, but keep out of my way. Give me a chance."

"Hit hard," Willetts went on. "You can do more with him than I could. He's cooling toward me."

She gave him a chilly smile to illustrate her point. "I think the weather has been changing slightly for both of us."

Willetts gave his shoulders a shrug of impatience.

"No more of 'both of us'. You are on a dead card with your scheme. We've got to pull together. Your school-book bill is laid out and you can't resurrect it. All the Midland bill needs now is his name—make him stick it on."

"And if I land him?" She tried to give him a sweet and innocent look.

"Three hundred thousand—Europe," said Willetts.

"And Lummers?" she asked. "What about him?"

Willetts sniffed. "A two-spot. He's been of no use to us, anyway. We'll throw him in the deck." The gambler stepped close to her. "See here," he said, pointing to a charm which weighed down his watch chain—a large, golden horseshoe set with diamonds. "I sat in a game with a couple of horsemen last night and cleaned them out. One of them staked his watchcharm and I won it. Do you know what this horseshoe signifies? It means good luck. Understand? Good luck for you and me, as long as we pull together."

Jim came down the stairway. "De Gub'nor will be down in a minute, sah." He stepped out upon the pillared veranda, and they heard him slowly pacing up and down, like a sentinel.

"This thing's got to be rushed," said Willetts. "It's getting squally around here. See?" he added, nodding toward Jim, "that nigger is on guard at the state house all day and is up here at night. The old man can't trust any one else. Suppose somebody should come in here and blow his head off! Where would our bill be? And there it is, ready to be signed. Make him do it." He swore and brought his hand down hard upon a table. "Why is he hanging back now?"

She gave a little laugh, as cold as the trickling of ice water. "Don't you know? Are all men as blind as bats? I saw it the first day I met the Governor—just the moment she came into the office."

"Some reform notion, I suppose," Willetts grunted. "He never acted this way before."

"It's worse than that," she said. "It's the widow."

"What, Mrs. Fairburn!" Willetts exclaimed in a loud whisper.

"Why, of course. You remember who raised the devil in the Garden of Eden, don't you?"

Willetts looked at her. "Well, ain't you a woman? Can't you do the same?"

"Maybe—but if I did I should want a pretty big bite of the apple."

"And you shall have it. Look out!"

The Governor came slowly down the stairway. His face was serious. He looked troubled; but greeted them pleasantly. Lucy smiled, not with chilliness now, but with sweetness and warmth. "Good evening, Governor. I hope you are well."

Willetts boldly struck out: "Well, everything seems to have been coming our way to-day." he remarked airily.

The Governor had begun to walk up and down the room, his hands behind him. "I don't know about that," he said. "I don't like it—it's bad."

Willetts spoke up quickly. "Murder always is bad. But who's to blame for it? We're not. And

if the charge sticks, you are Governor again, all right."

"But it looks like a trumped-up case," said the Governor, still walking to and fro. "I don't know that there was evidence to warrant the old man's arrest, to say nothing of sending him to jail."

Willetts took issue with him. "Excuse me, Governor, but that's where you are wrong. There's no doubt about this thing. Why, Old Man Reynolds had threatened to kill Jones—and for precisely the same cause. It's a clear case, and if the courts stand by us, it'll knock his son's canvass against you higher than a kite."

The Governor halted and confronted him. "How do you know it's a clear case?"

"Why, I was at the preliminary hearing before the justice of the peace. It seems that Wiley Jones had been in the habit of riding through Old Man Reynolds' plantation, and several times he threw down the fences and left them for some one else to put up. The old man, you know, was inclined to be hot-headed, so he waited for Wiley. 'Here,'

he said, 'don't you do that again or there'll be trouble,' but the next day the fences were down. Then the old man went after Wiley, 'If you go over my fields again, whether you throw down the fences or not,' he said, 'I'll put a hole through you.' Well, you know the rest. Wiley was seen riding toward the plantation again this morning. Shortly afterward his horse came home. Later they found Wiley—bullet hole in his head. Fences thrown down again. Coroner's jury said, 'Old Man Reynolds.' Justice of the peace says, 'Old Man Reynolds.' Everybody says, 'Old Man Reynolds.' It's all one way."

"Yes," said the Governor, walking up and down the room, "but it was all so hurried. The old man couldn't get away. It looks bad. And I understand that his poor old wife, refusing to be separated from him, has actually gone to the jail with him."

Willetts was ready with what he thought a clinching argument. "But, Governor, we can't help the foolishness of a silly old woman."

The Governor wheeled about. "Foolishness! Sir, I call it a most beautiful picture of womanly devotion."

The Governor had shown so strongly the spirit of condemnation that Willetts did not care to risk an argument of the case, so he said meekly: "Yes, that's all right; but what could they do? She would go."

"She must be got out of there. I'll send for her—I'll send for both of them. I want to hear his story. Here."

The Governor took out a note book, wrote upon a leaf, tore it out, folded it, handed it to Willetts and said: "Take this to the sheriff and have them brought here."

Willetts began to hem and haw. "Governor, I'm not on the best of terms with the sheriff just now. We had a little difference, and——"

"Take it to Lummers, then. Tell him to look after it at once."

Willetts bowed and started toward the door, and as he passed Lucy, he whispered: "Now."

"Governor," she began, "I hoped to find you in a pleasant frame of mind to-night. But I suppose you are bothered a great deal, aren't you?"

They had sat down on a divan, she beaming sweetly upon him. "Yes," he said, "by little things —trifles—flies! A big thing, it would be different. You can choke a dog till its eyes pop out, but you can't choke a fly. I guess you're never bothered that way. There are no flies on you."

Her smile was radiant. She liked him best when he was inclined to be humorous, for then she felt her influence over him. "Now you are yourself. That's better—I like you now." She moved closer to him, with a disposition to cuddle up against him.

"Do you? How much?" He looked upon the freshness of her face, felt the dazzle of her smile. Surely she was an engaging woman—and the Governor was not an anchorite.

"More than you will ever know, or any one else will believe," she said, cuddling closer to him.

"But how much is that?"

"I would rather show you than to tell you. But

seriously, Governor, would you do me a favor—a great favor—if you could do it just as well as not?"

"I don't know; I might—they say I'm about mean enough for anything, you know. But that school-book business is——"

"Oh, it isn't that."

"No?"

"No. The state of Mississippi won't indorse your old reader's platform—'we must educate, we must educate or we must perish'."

"No books? What's up now?"

"I want your name."

The Governor prankishly shrank from her. "Oh, this is so sudden."

"Calm your fluttering heart," she laughed. "I want you officially."

"Oh, only officially. I don't see anything very flattering in that."

"Yes, officially—at present."

"And by and by?"

"We'll see about that. But, now, the favor—the Midland Railway bill."

"Ah, switched, have you? What's that for?"

"Well," she said, "I think it would be a good thing——"

"For the state, of course," he interrupted. "Well, maybe you're right. As an employer I guess the state will pay you better than old Steve's book concern. Mississippi always paid me everything that was coming to me—and most everything has been coming."

"Well, why not? The state doesn't pay its public servants what they really deserve."

"Well, no; some of us, I guess, never get what we really deserve."

She laughed, pleased that he was still in a humorous mood. "But why shouldn't the state have what it deserves? It wants this Midland railroad. Why do you delay signing the bill?"

"There are several swamps about it that I want to look into."

"But the legislators have done that," she quickly replied. "That's what they are hired for."

"Um, no," he spoke up, shaking his head. "Not exactly. They are hired for ten dollars a day—and never adjourn."

"But you are going to sign the bill, aren't you?"

"Well, you see——"

"For my sake," she broke in, closer to him, gazing into his eyes, "for me."

"Well, for your sake, I guess——"

Jim interrupted by stepping in from the portico.

"Scuse me, sah, Mis' Fairburn an' dat boy what calls hisse'f Cap'n."

The Governor got up as quickly as he could.

"Show them in," he commanded, and then added, to Lucy: "They won't stay long. Step up to the library a minute. I'll soon get rid of them."

She hastened to obey. On the landing she halted.

"Governor," she whispered, "may I hope?"

"You couldn't do anything better," he gaily replied, waving his hand at her, as she threw him a kiss.

CHAPTER XIV

THE OLD MAN'S SIDE OF IT

Mrs. Fairburn and the "Captain" came into the room. The Governor saluted them graciously. The visit was, of course, a surprise. They were neighbors, in the sense of living near, but they were far apart socially. In a moment the Governor had forgotten the existence of the dashing creature up-stairs in the library. The Yankee who has done wrong may never reform, but he is ever on the look-out for an opportunity to do so. It is hard wholly to corrupt the blood of the Pilgrim Fathers. It may sometimes be harsh but never entirely dishonest. So the woman up-stairs was ignored, which was surely honest, and the Carpetbagger smiled upon the widow. He was not without a sense of poetry and he fancied that she had brought with her the fragrance of the perfumed dews, dripping from the blossoms.

"Good evening, Mrs. Fairburn and—Captain," was the way he welcomed them—not much in words, but his eyes showed a warmer greeting. "Sit down, won't you?"

"I thank you," said Mrs. Fairburn, "but my mission is one of exceeding sadness."

She sank into a chair. The Governor knew what she meant; but he bowed and said interrogatively: "Ah?"

"Of course you know," she began, "that this afternoon old Mr. Reynolds—"

"Yes, I know," the Governor broke in. "I know —bad, bad. I hope you don't think I had anything to do with it." He gave her a searching look, wondering if she did. But she put him at ease when frankly she added:

"Oh, surely not, Governor."

"Thank you," he remarked with a sigh. "I have already waived all law in the matter, and I'm going straight to the bottom of it myself."

"I am glad to hear that. Mr. Reynolds, you know, is one of the oldest and most highly respected—"

"Yes, I know," he broke in, "and I give you my word that he shall have full justice—law or no law."

The "Captain" had sat down stiffly on a straight-back chair, looking straight before him as a military man should. He paid no attention to the conversation of these civilians. The arrest of an old man could not interest him, unless it involved a court-martial.

"Governor," said Mrs. Fairburn, "there is something higher than the mere forms of law. Above all law stands the sublime figure—Justice."

"But like her twin sister, Truth, she is sometimes obscured by the dark fogs of ignorance and malice," the Governor replied, and the widow gave him a look in which there was no sectional prejudice—the look of a woman whose admiration was rising.

At this point the boy spoke up. "Governor, has my commission got here yet?" He did not look around.

"Ah, your commission—from Washington. No, not quite." And then speaking to Mrs. Fairburn the Governor added: "I have sent for old Mr. Rey-

nolds, and have ordered him brought here. I want to hear his side of the story."

"I am so glad, Governor. And whatever he tells you, you may rely upon as the whole truth."

Nellie jumped in at the door, slammed it after her, and then, opening it wide enough to peep through, cried out: "Go back, don't you come in here."

"What have you got there?" the Governor asked. "The alligator?"

"No, sir, it's Bulger. That dog will be the death of me." She turned and with a look of surprise recognized Mrs. Fairburn. "Why, good evening." Then she saw the boy. "Hello, Roy!" she cried, "I haven't seen you since this morning." She ran over to him.

"Nellie," said her father, "can't you find a chair?"

"Yes, sir, but I don't want one. Come on, Roy, I've got something I want to show you." The "soldier" forgot his military training and romped with her, up and down the veranda and out in the soft moonlight among the magnolia trees.

"They seem to have grown very fond of each other," said Mrs. Fairburn.

"Yes," replied the Governor; "along with their cats and their alligators and their bulldogs, my room looks like a case of delirium tremens."

Mrs. Fairburn smiled. After a short silence she said: "There is another matter, Governor. Do you remember? The pardon for that Francis boy. You said you would look into it."

"Did I?"

"You promised me you would."

"Promised you? I guess I did." He reached over and touched a bell. The negro appeared. "Jim," he said, "go up to the library and bring me the papers in the upper right hand pigeon-hole of my desk. If I'm not mistaken the pardon is among those papers, Mrs. Fairburn."

Jim slowly mounted the stairs, repeating to himself, "Upper right hand cornder, upper right hand cornder."

"I felt sure you had merely overlooked it, Governor."

"It isn't that," he replied. "I've been too busy to look into it."

"It wouldn't take so very long, would it, Governor?"

The Governor looked at her. Frankly she met his gaze. How beautiful her eyes were; how musical her voice sounded; how perfectly her gown fitted! Surely she didn't look like the mother of a son old enough to slaughter Indians! There was a peculiar softness in his voice as he slowly replied: "It wouldn't take me very long, Mrs. Fairburn, to look into any matter in which you were interested."

Jim came down stairs, limping to imply mystery, and, handing the Governor some papers, whispered: "White lady up dar, sah." The Governor took the documents, making him a sly sign to keep quiet, and began to read over their titles—'Concurrent Resolution, 68'—'To establish free schools and to provide for'—'Midland Railway bill'—Ah." He glanced toward the library, put this paper into his pocket, and proceeded to read: "'Pardon, Elias

Francis.' This is it. Thought it was here somewhere." He returned several papers to Jim and told him to put them back where he found them. "Upper right hand corner, remember."

"Yas, sah." Mounting the stairs the darkey repeated, "Upper right hand cornder" until he reached the landing.

"And, say, Jim," the Governor called, "bring a pen and ink."

"Yas, sah. Upper right hand cornder—pen and ink."

"Governor," said Mrs. Fairburn, "you don't know how much that piece of paper is worth to me."

A feeling of rascally humor seized the Governor and he significantly replied: "Well, you don't know how much it might have been worth to me either."

"It will carry joy to a stricken household," said the widow, too earnest in her gratitude to catch the Governor's joke.

"It couldn't be borne by a better messenger, madam."

"Thank you, Governor, you are very kind."

"How's that? Kind? Then there must be something wrong with me to-night, for I haven't heard that before since I struck the state." Jim came down. "On the table," said the Governor, motioning. The negro put down the pen and inkstand and took occasion to slyly whisper:

"White lady up dar yit, sah."

"Go on, go on," commanded the Governor, and under his breath added something that Mrs. Fairburn did not hear—it was just as well that she didn't. Jim nodded, grinned and resumed his place on the portico, slowly pacing up and down.

The Governor signed the pardon. "Understand," he said, "I don't really know anything about the merits of this case; I do this for—"

"For justice, Governor."

"No," said he, handing her the paper, "for a live goddess."

There was a tramping of feet on the flag-stone walk. The Governor listened. Mrs. Fairburn arose. Jim stepped in. "Mr. Lummers, Mr. Willetts an' some udder folks, sah."

"Show them in. It's Mr. Reynolds."

"I must go," said Mrs. Fairburn. "Where's Roy?"

"Don't—please don't," the Governor pleaded. "Wait."

They stood a little apart, with their eyes on the door, waiting for the newcomers to enter. Tremulous, but walking proudly, old John Reynolds, followed by the rest came through the broad doorway. The old planter was a picture, a picture now almost faded from the canvas of our national life, an out-of-date dignity, an emphasis of over-conscious self-respect in black. He advanced well within the room, glanced down to see that his wife was beside him, and stood erect, as still as his physical weakness would permit. It was some time before a word was spoken. The Governor bowed and was silent, gazing at the old man—the palsied remnant of a country's aristocracy. Mrs. Fairburn ran to the woman and embraced her. Willetts was the first to speak.

"Well, here we are, Governor."

"Yes," Lummers spoke up, "and a hard time we had bringing them, too."

The Governor cleared his throat. "Sit down, everybody," he commanded, but no one moved.

The old man took no notice of the Governor, but with a courtly gesture addressed himself to Mrs. Fairburn. "Good evening, Madam. And have you come here to intercede for me? That was wrong, Madam; it should not have been done." Then he slowly turned his old eyes upon the Governor. "Will you inform me for what purpose I have been brought here in violation of all forms of law?"

Mrs. Reynolds gently touched his arm. "John!" she pleadingly said.

The old man turned and bowed to her, and then addressed the Governor. "Well, sir!"

The Governor's voice was so soft that Mrs. Fairburn looked at him quickly, and Willetts moved uneasily. "Mr. Reynolds, no one could regret more deeply—"

"Spare yourself that trouble, sir," the old man interrupted. "Am I to be informed?"

"Mr. Reynolds, I have sent for you to—"

"By what authority?" the old man broke in.

"Well, by the authority of a kindly interest—if no other."

"I recognize no such authority, sir."

The old woman touched his arm again and called his name, speaking it in a voice full of sorrow and admonition—"John!" He saluted her gallantly.

"Now that you have come," continued the Governor, "I should like to hear your story."

"Story? I do not come here primed with a story."

"I want to hear your side of the case."

"This is no court of law, sir."

"Of course not; but understand—I do not demand this—I request it."

There was a softening change in the old man's manner. "Very well, sir, you shall have it. One morning I found that some one had thrown down my fences and ridden through my plantation. I put the fences up. The next day I saw a man throw down the fence and start to ride through. I hailed him. 'Sir,' I said, 'don't you do that again.' He made a sneering answer and rode on. Then

I called out to him: 'Sir, if you do that again I will shoot you.' I am told that to-day my fences were thrown down again and that this man rode through. Later, he was found dead near a gap that he had made in the fence."

"With a bullet hole in his head," Willetts spoke up.

The Governor made a gesture to enjoin silence. The old man proceeded:

"Somebody had killed him. I did not. And do you think, sir, that if he had fallen by my hand, I would stand here and deny it? No, sir. I did not kill him; but—the infamous scoundrel, I wish to God I had!"

Willetts stepped forward. "Governor," he began, "you must remember—"

"Silence, sir!" the Governor thundered. Then in kindly tones he said: "Mr. Reynolds, I have decided to take the law in my own hands—"

"You have already done that, sir."

"And release you on your own recognizance."

"You cannot do that, sir. I am answerable to the sheriff alone."

"I made the sheriff," the Governor quietly replied.

"Then, sir, to the law," said the old man.

"Damn the law—I beg your pardon, ladies." The Governor had lost his patience, though not in unkindness. "Take them away!" he said.

"Stop!" Reynolds interposed, "I demand to be taken back to the jail."

His old wife's pleading voice was heard. "Oh, John, let us not go back to the jail," she said. "It's such a dreary place."

"To the jail!" he cried excitedly. "It is the law."

The old woman looked up at him as he turned away. Taking his hand she softly said: "Then we'll go back together."

They turned toward the door and went out in silence. Willetts and Lummers prepared to follow them.

"Wait," said the Governor. "Put them down at their own door."

"But, Governor," Willetts interrupted.

"Do as I tell you—at their own door. Don't let them know where they are going. Lummers, go to the sheriff and tell him that under no conditions are they to be admitted to the jail again. Go!"

CHAPTER XV

A HORTICULTURAL IDEA

The Governor and Mrs. Fairburn stood in silence till they heard the carriage roll away. "Governor," said the widow, extending her hand, "I thank you. It was a noble act."

"Oh, that's all right," he replied, taking the proffered hand gingerly.

"You have proved yourself a man, Governor."

"You are surprised?"

"I am highly pleased."

"But—surprised. I'm sorry. You came to see the Governor and were surprised to find a man."

"I am glad that the man I found is greater than the Governor I came to see."

The Governor waved his hand in acknowledgment of these warm words of praise, and motioning toward a chair said: "Sit down. Mrs. Fairburn," he said, after a pause, "do you think it wrong for

a man to play the cards that circumstances have dealt him?"

"Not if he play them honorably, Governor."

"In a game where everyone else is cheating?"

"An honorable man should not be found in such a game," she replied.

"But remember," he insisted, "the cards of life are dealt by circumstances. A man is forced into the game, and must play the hand that is waiting for him."

She did not agree with him. "Man is not the creature but the creator of circumstances," she said quietly.

"No," contended the Governor, "the wise man as well as the fool is a creature of environment." He ran his fingers through his hair, thinking. Suddenly he looked up. "Imagine a tangled garden," he said, "wild and neglected, choked with weeds and briars, an unsightly jungle. Amid that rank wilderness of weeds a single rose lifts its head. It isn't much of a rose; but it is a rose. Do the magnificent flowers which glorify the well-kept

garden across the road, deserve more credit than that stunted weakling which has fought its way to the air and the sun?"

It was her turn to reflect, and she did so for a moment or two. "But who would plant a rose in such a jungle?"

"Circumstances might; circumstances do," he replied. "Is that the fault of the rose?"

"No," she admitted. "We are not responsible for our existence; we are responsible for our lives. How much better if kindly hands would tear away the weeds and let in the pure air and the sun-light."

Jim stepped in and handed the Governor a card. He looked at it. "Um, Captain Pointer. Tell the Captain to come in."

Mrs. Fairburn arose. "I must find Roy," she said, "and bid you good-night."

"No; not yet, please."

"Yes, I really must be going. I don't know why I should have remained so long. I——"

Captain Pointer appeared at the door. He saw Mrs. Fairburn, bowed to her and entered the room.

Advancing toward the Governor he halted and with a military salute, bade him good evening. Mrs. Fairburn turned toward Jim who stood at the door.

"I wish you would see if you can find my son," she said, "tell him that it's time we were going home."

"Just a minute," the Governor spoke up, addressing Mrs. Fairburn as the negro hastened off. "I'm rather interested in that horticultural idea of yours."

The Captain glanced slily at Mrs. Fairburn and handed the Governor a letter. The Governor opened it, read its brief contents and handed it back. Mrs. Fairburn had moved over to the window, and stood there looking out with her face turned away from the two men.

"I don't believe in this sort of thing," said the Governor in a low tone; "don't believe in it at all—seventeenth century. Tell him I want to see him. Ask him to come here—alone—and we'll talk it over."

The Captain gave him a cool smile. "But, Governor, such a thing would be—"

"I know all about that; you tell him to come here."

"He will no doubt come, sir, if you refuse to—"

"Good-night, sir. Give him my answer."

The Captain, with his smile growing cooler, bowed himself out. Mrs. Fairburn did not look round. If she had heard their conversation she gave no indication of that fact.

The Governor advanced toward her. "Mrs. Fairburn," he began, "when I was a boy I used to fear death; now I know that life is the only thing to be feared. The ruler of an enemy's country—with every man's hand against me—not a friend save my own flesh and blood and one whose skin is as black as the estimation in which I am held. That is my garden, Mrs. Fairburn."

"It may be an enemy's country, Governor, but it holds one friend who will always be grateful to you and a hand that shall never be against you." She held forth her hand and the Governor took it.

"Mrs. Fairburn," he cried, "I am the one to feel grateful to-night; and I do." He hesitated for a

moment, still holding her hand. "You have changed the current of my life."

"Governor," the widow slowly said, with more earnestness than he had ever noticed before, "a little thing may serve to divert the current of your life; but you alone can change it."

"Alone?" echoed the Governor, looking into her eyes.

"Alone," she repeated. "You must do it yourself."

She gently withdrew her hand and for a moment neither spoke. There was a queer lump in the Carpetbagger's throat which kept him silent and Mrs. Fairburn seemed to be thinking of something away back in the past. "Governor," she said at last, her voice low and musical and soothing, "I was born among the mountains of old Tennessee and I love that rugged country. To me there is nothing in the whole realm of nature more beautiful than a mountain brook—clear as crystal, bright as the sunshine, sweet as the dews of heaven. I never see a muddy stream, dark and polluted, that I don't

think of what that stream was, away back up yonder in the mountains. I never behold such a stream without a sigh and a wish that somehow I could remove the contaminating influences that have made it what it is."

She looked straight into the Governor's eyes and he read the imagery of her words aright.

"A muddy stream may be powerful," she continued. "Circumstances may make it very powerful. It may even be very useful, in its way. But it is no longer beautiful, Governor, because it is no longer pure."

He tried to speak, but, though his lips moved, no sound came from them. It seemed as if a giant hand had tightly gripped his throat. When at last he found his voice its sound startled him. "Yes," he whispered, hoarsely, "I know. I understand. It's all true. But if this stream, dark and muddy as it is, could be made as clear as a crystal spring—could the world forget—could you forget—that it had once been polluted?"

Big Jim came lumbering into the room. "I kain't

find dat Cap'n boy no whar," he said. "I thought I yere him an' Miss Nellie a-laughin' one place an' I went dar, an' den I yere him an' her summers else an' I goes an' dey ain't dar. I looks up in de moonlight an' dey ain't dar—an' de Lawd only knows whar dey is."

The negro suddenly discovered that he had not an attentive audience and stopped short in abashed amazement. Mrs. Fairburn detached a rose from her bodice and extended it toward the Governor.

"Make it clear," she said.

CHAPTER XVI

NOT QUITE SO MUDDY

Roy did not make his appearance and Governor Crance volunteered to escort his fair visitor home. Jim looked after them as they walked out. Then he laughed. "Things gwine on yere, I tell yo'. Fust thing I knows I'll hab two pa'r o' couples t' watch. An'—an'—a white lady in de liberry." He went to a door opening out into the garden, and whistled. Nellie and Roy entered cautiously. "An' now, if you'll 'scuse me fur t'arin' myself away," said the negro, "I'll jest step out on de po'ch an' ketch a few flies fur de alligator."

Nellie and Roy sat down beside each other. They had formulated a desperate scheme. The fragrance of the flowers, the soft air, the moonlight had been too much for the girl to withstand. All nature demanded something romantic of her. "And

remember," she said, "it must be at midnight—precisely."

"Yes," drawled the boy, a little afraid now that he was out of the moonlight, "but I don't see the use of all that."

"Well, how else could it be done?" she pouted.

"Why, I'd just go up like a soldier and tell him."

"Oh, no, no; that would never do."

"I don't know. I think the Governor likes me pretty well, and, besides, I think he's a little soft on mother. I'd just as soon chance it. I'll bet he'd say yes."

"Of course he would, you goose, and that would spoil it all. Anybody could be married like that. If I can't elope, I won't be married at all."

The boy pondered for a moment or two and then looked up brightly. "If we ask him, maybe he'll let us elope."

She was angry enough to have boxed his ears. "Why, you ninny, this is a secret," she cried, indignantly. "We mustn't tell anybody about it. All elopements are secret. Don't you remember how

they did in the 'Lost Heiress'? Have you got a black horse?"

"No, but I've got a bay."

"That won't do. It's got to be black."

"And how about the ladder?" she asked.

"What ladder?"

"Why, the rope-ladder."

"What do you want a ladder for?"

"To get out of the window. How do you suppose I'm going to get down?"

"Why, come down the stairs, can't you?"

She gave him a look that was enough to have withered him. "No, sir; who ever heard of such a thing? Coming down the stairs!"

"Won't any sort of ladder do?" he asked.

"Oh, I forgot!" she cried. "We can't have a horse. Couldn't take Bulger on a horse. Or the parrot, or the cat, or the alligator."

"Great Scott! Can't you leave 'em here?"

"No, sir; do you think I'd leave Bulger behind?"

It was time for the boy to think again. "Well, if everything's got to go along," he growled, "it

would take an express wagon to run away with you."

Jim, outside, gave a warning whistle. A moment later the negro poked his head into the room. "Coast ain't clear now, Miss Nellie. Man-o-wah's comin'."

They heard the Governor, whistling a merry tune. Nellie and Roy hastily took seats on opposite sides of the room. The Governor came in briskly. "Captain, your mother wants you," he said.

Roy got up awkwardly and stood for a moment as if he felt it incumbent upon himself to say something. But nothing came into his mind, so he stood, looking hopelessly at the girl.

"I'll just run over with him," she said. "I think he's afraid to go alone."

"What, and a soldier!" exclaimed the Governor, with mock earnestness. Then the young fellow found his tongue. "I am not afraid to go anywhere," he declared, straightening up stiffly.

The Governor saluted. "Good-night, Captain."

Nellie went with Roy to the door, whispered to him and threw him a kiss as he passed out.

"Pigeons!" chuckled the Governor, "I suppose they think I'm blind." Nellie turned toward him. "In your wonderful collection of pets, I suppose you are growing to like the biped best of all, aren't you?" he asked. She bashfully nodded her head and the Governor continued: "Well, that's right. I rather like that parrot myself."

"Parrot!" she exclaimed, indignantly.

"Why, certainly. You haven't added any other two-legged freak to your aggregation, have you?"

"N—no, sir."

"Well, I should hope not. The house is getting so cluttered up with your pets that I guess I'll have to call a halt now. Whenever you want to add another one to your outfit, you'll have to get my consent first. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Biped, quadruped or centipede."

"Yes, sir."

"Is it a bargain? Good! Now, then, how'd you like to be my secretary, eh?"

"Goody! May I?"

"If you promise to be real good and not bother me by asking questions about things that don't concern you, I'll let you help me with my letters up in the library."

With an exclamation of delight Nellie darted toward the stairway and was halfway up to the landing before the Governor suddenly recollected that the library already contained a visitor. "Nellie!" he shouted. She stopped in amazement. "Here! Come down. I can't let you help me tonight. Some other time. There! Run along now. The alligator may need a few more flies before bedtime."

Though somewhat disappointed, the girl needed no second bidding, as she was eager to muse alone over the ripening of her own romantic schemes. The Carpetbagger waited till she had shut the door; then he started up the stairs. Suddenly he saw the rose, on the lapel of his coat. He halted. "Jim," he called, stepping down into the room. The negro, never far off, appeared in an instant. "Ask the lady in the library to come down." He buttoned his

coat tightly and stood, waiting. Lucy came tripping down the stairs, ahead of Jim.

"Is my hair gray?" she asked, banteringly. "Well, you'll have to make up for lost time."

The Governor was cool. "I haven't lost any time," he said.

"Well, I have. I've read all the books in your old library."

"Then you haven't lost time," he replied. "You've improved it."

"Well, let's not lose any now," she said. "How about that bill?"

"What bill?"

"Why, the Midland."

He looked at her steadily. "I can't recall any such bill—to-night," he said.

The lobbyist started. "Ah!" she exclaimed, evidently surprised. "Will your memory be better to-morrow?"

"I'm afraid not. My memory seems to be getting worse every day."

"Governor, you can't forget that bill. If you do, others will forget the election."

"That's all right. The election will have to take care of itself."

"But will it take care of you?"

"I don't know. And I don't care."

"Governor, do you know what this means?" Now there was genuine alarm in her voice.

"Yes," slowly replied the Carpetbagger. "I do. It means that the next man who serves as Governor of the State of Mississippi is going to be elected Governor."

She gave her head a contemptuous toss. "Suicide! Are you going to throw over all your friends?"

"Friends? What friends?"

"Why, your political friends."

"There is no such thing as a political friend."

She tossed her head again. "Then if there are no political friends there can be no political obligations. Remember that."

"I'll not forget it. Shall I order my carriage for you?"

"No, thank you, I prefer to go as I came." She

walked off full of anger, but thought better of it and at the door turned to him. "Let us part as friends. Good-night." She held forth her hand, hoping that by a touch she might win him back. But her magnetism failed her this time, for he grasped her hand as he would have taken the hand of a man. "Good-night," she repeated. "Good-bye," said the Governor, with significant emphasis. She went out. Walking slowly about the room, he looked down at the rose on his lapel.

"I don't believe our stream is quite so muddy as it was," he mused.

CHAPTER XVII

NOTHING BUT ACTION NOW

The Governor was walking slowly up and down the room, with an occasional glance at the rose, when Major Reynolds' card was brought in. His step had come hard upon the floor of the portico, and the negro's eyes were wide with apprehension. "Show him in," said the Governor, with another glance at the rose, resuming his walk. He heard the Major enter and turned to face him.

"Good evening, sir," said the Governor. "Will you sit down?"

"Sir," the Major began, with his head high and his breast full, "in contravention of all usages between gentlemen, I am here at your request."

"Yes, I sent for you. We are both too old to—make fools of ourselves. Let's talk this thing over."

"Sir," replied the Major, with terrible earnestness, "when you arrest my father and send him

and my old mother to jail, the matter has gone beyond talk and beyond explanation. Nothing but action now!"

"But, Major, do you think for a moment that I caused your father's—"

"Any man who would be guilty of such an outrage would not hesitate to deny it. In your office I summoned you to meet the voters of this commonwealth at the polls. In this affair you meet me—you must do it."

"But wait a moment, Major. Do you know what my position in this matter is?"

"I do not care what your position is. I understand my duty as a man of honor, and I know that you are a coward as well as a scoundrel. You shall not dodge this issue if I have to horse-whip you publicly through the streets."

The old Carpetbagger recoiled as if he had been stung. He drew himself up to his full height. There was a light in his eye such as no one ever had seen there before. "Stop!" he cried, his long, bony forefinger pointing like a pistol straight at the

Major's face. "Hold on, now! I've got a bullet here," he said, tapping his left shoulder. "Some of you fellows gave it to me at Antietam. Maybe you did it—I don't know. But I wasn't dodging then and I haven't dodged since then." He stopped for a moment and then added, with evident effort to master his feelings: "Four years of fighting was enough for me. It ought to have been enough for you. Don't be a fool."

The Major stood stern and unmoved. He was not thinking of the war or its consequences, but of the fact that an outrage had been put upon his father and his mother. The cold light of a sneer fell across his grim countenance. "Sir," he said, "even a coward is safe in his own house. But to-morrow, whenever and wherever I meet you, I will shoot you as I would a rabid cur. Take your pistol with you. I will make you use it."

"Do you mean that I must choose between a duel and assassination?" calmly inquired the Governor.

"Call it what you like," hotly rejoined the Southerner. "You know what I mean."

"I will fight."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Major, with brightening countenance.

"Let me tell you," continued the Carpetbagger, "that this business has no place in modern civilization. It belongs to the seventeenth century. But if there be no alternative—if it must come—if we must go back into romance—let's go 'way back. Meet me at midnight—alone—no seconds—in the garden out there under the magnolias. I'll be there with an extra saber at your disposal. I don't give that," he added, snapping his fingers, "for your code or your customs; but I'll meet you—man to man."

The Major smiled. "Thank you," he said. "I will be there. Until then, sir, I bid you good-night." He bowed in a stately fashion, stepped to the door, turned, bowed again and passed out.

The Governor walked up and down the room. "It had to come," he mused. And he seemed relieved that some sort of settlement had at last been reached. It had been an eventful evening, an evening of stern decision and almost of tender-

ness, an evening scented by the sweet odor of a rose. He touched a bell. "Jim," he said, "lock up for the night." The negro began to close the doors and windows and to draw the curtains. Nellie looked into the room, timidly.

"May I come in?" she asked. The Governor held out his arms toward her. "What was all that loud talking?" she went on, looking with strange inquiry at her father. "I have been waiting ever so long for my good-night kiss. You weren't going to forget me to-night, were you?"

The Governor answered with an emotional note of tenderness in his voice. "No, little one, I could not forget you—to-night." He kissed her fondly and, going with her to the door, kissed her again. "Good-night, little one."

"Mus' I put out all de lights, sah?" said Jim.

"Except in the library. I have some writing to do. But don't wait for me. Go to bed."

"Yas, sah," said the negro. "Good-night, sah."

"Jim!"

"Yas, sah."

"Come here."

Drawing a roll of bills from his pocket, the Carpetbagger pressed it into the negro's hand. "Jim," he said, "you're a good fellow. Keep it—it's yours." The darkey looked at him in surprise. Too much overcome to say anything he drooped, bowed his head and went out, taking a lamp with him. The room was dark. The Governor went to a window and drew aside the curtains. The full moon, sentiment's searchlight, threw a flood of silvery whiteness upon him as he looked out toward the magnolias in the garden. Slowly he bowed his head and his lips touched the flower upon his coat.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WHIPPOORWILL'S CALL

Two hours is scant time to prepare for death, but Governor Crance found it too long. His business affairs required no settlement. Exposed as he had long been to the danger of assassination, he had taken the precaution to guard against any emergency. There were a few letters to be written—that was all.

Above his desk in the library two cavalry sabers hung crossed upon the wall. One of them he had carried through the war; the other he had wrenched from the stiffening clutch of a fallen foe at Antietam. Both had done bloody service. For the first time since they had been hung up as ornamental trophies, he took the weapons down and looked them over. Of different workmanship, they were equal in length, in weight and in sharpness.

"I don't know how this will go on the ground,"

he mused, as he again grasped the old familiar hilt. "It used to be all right in the saddle—a dash and a slash and it was over with. But this is different. Still, it beats a pistol. They say he is the best shot in the South and I couldn't hit the side of a barn."

The house was still. From the negro quarters, faint and far, floated snatches of plantation melodies and the thrumming of a banjo. A tiny clock upon the mantel startled the Governor by chiming the hour of eleven.

"An hour yet," he muttered. "It's bad enough to hunt for trouble, but I believe it is worse to wait for it. I can't stay here, or I'll suffocate."

With the sabers under his arm he quietly tiptoed down the stairway, opened a window and stepped out upon the broad veranda. It was a glorious moonlit night, almost as light as day, bright and blue and balmy. The soft air, sweet with the fragrance of magnolias and the flowery incense of midsummer bloom, seemed to whisper, "Peace on earth, good will to men," and its message went straight to his heart.

"Why should a man be shoved back into the middle ages like this?" he said, half savagely. "I feel as if I were trying to break into one of Walter Scott's novels. I don't want to kill him and Mississippi can't afford to lose him. I've seen enough of blood—wasn't cut out for a butcher any way. But," he added, firmly, "it's better to be the butcher than the beef. If a corpse has got to be furnished it won't be mine if I can help it."

A dry twig snapped beneath his foot with a report like a pistol and a startled night bird fluttered among the bushes. Saber in hand, he turned, half expecting to face a foe; but it was the instinct of self-defense rather than an indication of nervousness, for he never was more completely master of himself. Indeed he marveled at his own coolness at such a time for, try as he might, he could not convince himself of the seriousness of the situation. Of one thing he felt perfectly sure—he would come out all right.

"Cards alone don't count," he had often said. "A great deal depends on how they are played.

In a crisis, the fellow who loses his head loses the game, no matter what he has in his hand."

Looking back toward the gubernatorial mansion, its tall columns shining white in the moonlight, like a spectral castle framed in shadow, he was surprised to see a light twinkling from one of the upper windows, Nellie's room or the library, he could not tell which. "That's queer," he soliloquized. "I could have sworn I put out that light a few minutes ago. And Nellie has been in dreamland for a couple of hours. I must have forgotten and left it burning."

Near the center of a little grove of magnolias, at the lower end of the garden, stood a great live oak, a rough, gnarled giant, whose twisted trunk and sprawling branches had often been explored by Nellie and Roy during their romping expeditions. About this tree there was an open space of greensward, as if the younger trees had withdrawn to a respectful distance from the old monarch of the garden and had halted to form a guard of honor. Sharply silhouetted against the moon, the branches overhead threw upon the grass fantastic shadows, that changed with every breeze.

"There's plenty of room here," said the Governor, half aloud, as he looked over the spot. "I've a good half hour yet; but I won't keep him waiting. I've always found that the best way to get through a bad job is to make a good beginning."

He leaned the sabers against the oak and sat down upon one of its knotty roots. A minute later, his thoughts played truant and overleaped the stone wall near by. The widow! Did she know? She was present when Capt. Pointer presented the Major's challenge. Could it be possible that her womanly intuition had deserted her upon that occasion, so that she suspected nothing? If she knew the contents of the Captain's missive she gave no sign. Maybe she did not care. Perhaps, even now, she might be closeted with Major Reynolds, praying for his success and bidding him Godspeed. Why not? Had she not been the Major's friend from childhood? Did not the gossips say that it was the Major who had recently induced her to lay aside the sable gowns she had worn for years as a tribute to one long dead? And did they not predict that

this change was soon to be followed by the donning of orange-blossoms and the bridal veil? And yet there was the rose—her rose—upon his coat lapel!

A queer whistle, like the call of a whippoorwill, among the trees near by, ended the Governor's reverie abruptly and brought him to his feet. He listened intently. There was no sound save the soft soughing of the wind among the branches overhead.

"A whippoorwill?" he ejaculated, incredulously. "Down here? I never heard one here before. Didn't think there was one in the whole state of Mississippi." He picked up the sabers. The whistle was repeated. This time there could be no mistake—it was plainly a crude imitation of the whippoorwill's note, but no one whose boyhood was passed upon a northern farm would have been deceived by it. The old Carpetbagger smiled. "That sounds to me more like love than war," he remarked, as he stepped back among the dark magnolia shadows to await developments. "I thought so," he added, half a minute later, as the

boyish figure of Roy came into view on the opposite side of the grassy plot.

By halting stages the young "Indian fighter," advanced into the open, whistling repeatedly and listening in vain for an answering signal.

"This is the place, all right," he exclaimed, glancing about him apprehensively, as if afraid of the shadows. "Now, where is she? 'Tain't right to treat a fellow like this—whistling around in the woods. By jingo! Maybe she is playing a trick on me and expects me to stay out here all night! If I thought she was, I'd never speak to her again as long as I live!"

His courage plainly was fast oozing out at his finger tips and he was about to beat an ignominious retreat. A low whippoorwill whistle near by brought him to a sudden halt. "There she is now!" he cried, darting forward. The Governor stepped out into the moonlight.

"Great Scott! It's the old man!" gasped Roy, jumping behind the oak. "And he's got a sword, too." He peered around the trunk, cautiously.

"Good Lord! He's got two swords!" A moment later he had clambered hastily up the tree and snugly ensconced himself among the leafy branches. Below him stood a tall figure with a glittering saber in either hand.

CHAPTER XIX

MOVING THE MENAGERIE

The unexpected advent of Roy upon the scene immediately changed the aspect of affairs and proved a welcome diversion for the Governor, whose sides shook with suppressed laughter as he saw the young lover's frantic attempt to avoid detection. The impending duel was forgotten instantly; tragedy gave way to comedy.

"I'm sorry I scared that bird away," he remarked aloud, for the youngster's benefit. "Whippoorwills are so scarce down here, he would have been a fine addition to Nellie's pets." He paused to whistle the whippoorwill call softly a few times. "Too bad!" he continued. "He's gone. I'd like to catch him. If we can't do that, I'll shoot him and have him stuffed." Above him, his face blanched with terror, Roy hugged the oak as tightly as its own bark. Suddenly, upon the still night air, there came

an answering call, a weak, uncertain, tremulous whippoorwill note from the other end of the garden.

"Hello! He's over there now!" exclaimed the Governor, his eyes twinkling with humor. "Wonder if I can't call him back." Again and again he whistled. The answering call grew near and nearer. A few minutes later, a white dress stood out in bold relief among the dark shadows of the magnolias and Nellie timidly stepped into the moonlight.

The Carpetbagger looked at her and chuckled with amusement. Her arms were filled with band-boxes, parcels and packages. In one hand, she carried a green parrot in a cage; in the other, a long, perforated box, the temporary home of a pet alligator. At her heels trotted the big, white bulldog, Bulger. She whistled softly; an answer came from behind the oak. "Ah! There you are!" she cried, excitedly, hurrying forward. The Governor put down his sabers and advanced to meet her. "Yes," he replied, quietly. There was a scream of consternation; the bird-cage, boxes and packages were dropped in indiscriminate confusion and Bulger added to the excitement by barking furiously.

"You've—you've dropped something, I think," remarked the Governor, kindly.

The frightened child made no reply.

"Moving?" he asked, quizzically.

"N—no, sir."

"Um! What are you doing?"

"I—I—don't know, sir."

"You don't know!" exclaimed the Carpetbagger, in mock astonishment. "That's bad. That's mighty bad. A girl who goes out alone at this time of night ought to know what she is doing."

A soft, round arm went up across Nellie's eyes and she began to cry softly. "I—I—wasn't going very far," she sobbed; "and I was coming right back."

"Well, don't you think you have gone far enough now? Aren't you about ready to go back?"

A choking sob was the only answer. The old man softened. There was a kindly note of seriousness in his voice as he laid his hand on her shoulder and said: "Little one, it's all right. Don't cry. Everything is all right. You've always trusted me; trust me now. Will you?"

She was in his arms in an instant, weeping as if her heart would break. "There, there, there," he said, soothingly, as he patted her blonde locks. "The heart of a young girl is not a safe guide to the maze of matrimony. The flutterings of your own little heart have filled your head with romantic nonsense. Wait. When you are a little older your head and your heart will lead you aright. You mustn't do this, my child. There is no romance in dishonor, and the path you have chosen to-night might lead you there."

He paused. The child nestling within his arms had sobbed herself into submission. "I was coming right back," she repeated, humbly.

"My poor, motherless girl!" he continued. "How could you know? God grant you may be happy in a good man's love! But the man who would be your husband must lead you to the altar, not wait for you in the dark."

Was it the wind that sighed so deeply among the branches overhead?

"Now, then," continued the Carpetbagger, bright-

ening, "go back. Here's your menagerie." He handed her the parrot and the alligator as he spoke and began loading her arms with parcels.

"But no more of this. Understand?"

"No, sir," was the ready response. "Never! I'll never speak to that boy again as long as I live. He didn't come, anyway!"

The wind no longer sighed among the oak leaves—it groaned.

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," laughed the Governor. "I wouldn't say that. Good-night." He turned her face toward him in the moonlight and kissed her warmly, tenderly, reverently. "Good-night, my child. Good-night and pleasant dreams."

He watched her until she disappeared from view. Then he picked up the sabers. "Captain," he said, quietly, "come down."

There was a moment of silence and then a scared voice amid the overhanging branches tremulously asked:

"Is—is it all right?"

"I guess so," cheerily replied the Governor. "What do you want up there, anyway?"

"I want—to come down."

The Carpetbagger laughed. "Is that why you went up?" he asked.

"I didn't know but it might be a little healthier for me up here."

"Are you hunting Indians, to-night, Cap?"

"No—my commission hasn't got here yet."

"Come down." Roy did so, rather sheepishly. The Carpetbagger suddenly stepped out into the moonlight and looked at his watch. "Roy," he said, hurriedly, "I like you. I want you to do what is right. Will you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good!"

"On the word of a gentleman, Governor—"

"And a soldier?"

"Yes, sir."

The old man extended his hand and Roy grasped it warmly.

"If you love Nellie you can afford to wait for her, can't you?"

"How long?"

"Till your mother gives her consent."

"Will you give yours then?"

"Mine may not be necessary." The Governor glanced about him. "I am willing to leave the matter entirely in her hands. Isn't it about your bedtime?"

"Governor, you are a trump!" cried Roy, excitedly. "And I want to say to you, sir, that I would do anything in the world for you."

"Thank you. Good-night. Go to bed."

"Just as soon as she says 'yes,' Governor?"

"Yes. Good-night."

"I'll get an answer from her inside of ten minutes. Good-night. I'll see you in the morning. Good-night." And the excited youngster was away like a shot. A dry twig snapped among the magnolias near by and the Governor turned with a start. The commanding figure of Major Reynolds stepped into view, halted and gave a formal military salute.

"You are punctual, sir," he said. "I thank you."

CHAPTER XX

A BAD WAY TO SPRINKLE THE LAWN

It had been a day of unusual excitement, and the evening developed so many stirring incidents that Mrs. Fairburn found it impossible to think of sleep. Long after Governor Crance had left her at her own door and had bidden her good-night, she sat in an easy chair, upon the broad veranda, rapt in meditation. It was a perfect midsummer night and her thoughts were busy with the murder of Wiley Jones, the arrest of Old John Reynolds, the devotion of his aged wife and the probable effect of their imprisonment upon the Major's canvass. She had seen the awakening of a new and generous impulse in the Governor and wondered whither it would lead. In the midst of her reflections, one fact continually obtruded itself—the visit of Captain Pointer. She knew that he was a trusted lieutenant of Major Reynolds and one of the confidential advisers of his

campaign. What business could he have with his leader's arch enemy?

As the night wore on, an irresistible feeling of unrest seized her, a vague sense of impending danger, a presentiment of approaching peril. Again and again, she paced up and down the long portico, occasionally stopping to lean against its stately pillars, intent to catch any unusual sight or sound. Far over in the town, the big bell of a church steeple tolled the hour of midnight. As its last note died away, her quick eye detected a dark figure moving among the shadows of the garden. Swiftly it drew nearer, and a few moments later she was astonished to recognize the familiar features of Roy. As he sprang up the steps she confronted him. The "soldier" uttered a cry of surprise and sank into a chair in speechless confusion.

"What's the matter?" she anxiously inquired. "What has happened? Where have you been?"

"I—I want to get married," gasped the youngster.

"What!"

"The Governor is willing—whenever you say so."

She caught him by the arm and turned him about sharply so that the moonlight fell full upon his face.

"Are you asleep?" she demanded, giving him a gentle shake. "Are you dreaming? Where have you been?"

He motioned helplessly toward the Governor's garden. "Over there," he said, laconically.

"Over where?"

"In—in the garden. He's given his consent—as soon as you say so."

"Who has?"

"The Governor."

"The Governor? Governor Crance?"

Roy nodded vigorously. "I just left him and he says it's all right."

"He says what's all right? Where did you see him?"

"Over there," making a comprehensive sweep with his arm toward the neighboring grounds.

"At this time of night?"

Roy nodded.

"What were you doing there?"

The young "soldier" maintained a discreet silence.

"What was the Governor doing?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?" she echoed. "At this time of night?" Suddenly she grasped the boy's arm tightly. "Was he alone?" she demanded. "Did you see anyone else? Was he waiting for somebody?"

Roy nodded, bashfully. "He was waiting for me, I guess," he said. "Anyway, he had a couple of swords."

Mrs. Fairburn threw over her head the light wrap she had worn about her shoulders. "Quick!" she cried. "Show me the way. I'll follow you."

When Governor Crance found himself face to face with Major Reynolds he actually experienced a feeling of relief. He was glad that at last the high pressure period of suspense was to be broken. With a courteous salutation he threw the two sabers upon the ground. "Take your pick," he said. "I don't think you'll find much difference between them."

The Major drew off his gloves and carefully laid them down with his hat. Then he removed his coat, folded it neatly, and picked up one of the weapons. The Carpetbagger carelessly threw aside his hat and coat and began to roll up his shirt sleeves.

"This is a bad way, Major, to sprinkle the lawn," he remarked, grimly, as he seized the remaining saber.

"I haven't come here, sir, to talk," said the Major.

"Well, I have," responded the Governor, the point of his weapon resting upon the greensward. "I want to tell you something. I didn't seek this thing. You have forced it on me. If you insist on going ahead with it now, I'm going to kill you."

The Major smiled.

"And I'm going to kill you," continued the Carpetbagger, "not because I want to, but because I've got to."

The Major's saber cut a glistening circle in the moonlight as he gave a military salute with it. "Take your position, sir," he said. A moment later

there was a sharp flash of fire as the two weapons met in midair with a clang that re-echoed through the little grove. The two men were not equally matched. In point of physical strength Major Reynolds outclassed his antagonist, although the latter had more agility and greater nervous force. No time was lost in petty preliminaries. The Major went at his work as if he were in a hurry to get through a disagreeable task, and the Governor's saber seemed as eager as his own. Though the Carpetbagger repeatedly broke ground and gave way before the superior strength of his adversary his shiftiness made him a dangerous antagonist and the Major frequently fought upon the defensive. Not a word was spoken and no sound broke the stillness of the hour save the swish of the circling blades and the clang of opposing steel. Suddenly a woman's startled cry rang out, there was a rustle of silken skirts among the magnolias and Mrs. Fairburn ran toward the duellists. Straight between them she rushed, her white hands upraised as if to part the angry weapons. The two men recoiled in-

stinctively; she seemed to throw them apart as a strong man might separate two street urchins engaged at fisticuffs.

"Gentlemen!" she cried. It was both a command and an entreaty. "Put up your swords!"

Neither man moved.

"You may be enemies of each other. You are both friends of mine. Put up your swords."

There was no answer save the soft soughing of the wind among the trees.

"Were not four years of this enough?" she continued. "Is this soil still thirsty for blood? Have you forgotten that peace has come? Governor, you are a man of sober judgment. I am sure that you did not seek this of your own accord; I am certain that an appeal to your reason will lead you out of it. Put up your sword."

The Carpetbagger glanced at his antagonist, but he saw in those cold gray eyes nothing but implacable hatred.

"Major," pleaded the woman between them, "you may regard this man as a political enemy; but

if you had seen what I saw to-night, you would esteem him as your personal friend. As soon as he learned of the indignity that had been put upon your father and your old mother, he ordered their release, and, even against your father's protest, sent them home in his own carriage, and ordered them to be set down at their own door. This was not the scheme of a political enemy, Major, but the act of an honorable, compassionate man."

The Southerner's grasp relaxed.

"If you still believe that, because you are political antagonists, you must be personal foes," she added, "I will not ask you to shake hands; but, gentlemen—"

The Major's weapon fell upon the grass at the widow's feet with the Governor's saber across it.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BOY AT THE SPRING

No account of the duel, to be blown about the streets and into the secluded corners of private life, came to the active gossips of the town. The Major was silent, Pointer was a Sphynx, Governor Crance held the secret, and the discreet widow put a hush-stamp upon the lips of the "Indian fighter." The penetrative Willetts knew that something must have occurred, but he could get no farther than the threshold of it; and there was but one thoroughly disgusted man who had, either remotely or otherwise, contributed to the affair—the farmer who had furnished the Major with horses. Early next morning he sent a field hand to the railway station to get a daily newspaper, being so anxious that he could not wait for his regular budget, the weekly. He even strode forth from his unfinished breakfast to meet the man on the road. Seizing the paper he

leaned against a tree, to give himself more comfort in his expected enjoyment, and began to search eagerly for the welcome news of the Carpetbagger's death. His eye swept column after column; he shifted his position and continued his search; a painful look settled upon his face, and crumpling the paper, he threw it upon the ground and stamped upon it.

"Dave," said he, "I want you to go right up to town this minute and fetch them horses back. But come to the house first with me. I want to write a letter to Reynolds."

He was but poorly equipped to express his feelings with a pen, but his daughter was abundantly able, having gone through a school taught by a maiden lady of sour aspect; so she served as a transmitter of the old man's wrath. "Sir," he began, with instructions to make the word heavy and insulting, "Sir, when a man tells me that he will do a thing I expect him to do it. You have imposed on me; you have obtained horses under false pretenses. And I want to say that a man who would

so work on my confiding nature is not much better than a Carpetbagger. I made a speech in your favor at the barbecue down on the bayou. I said you were a man of the people, our redemption, and so on. I would have swum a river to vote for you, but the Lord forbid that I should do it now. You send me them horses as fast as you can. They have never been known to balk, but there's no telling what they will do after you have handled them. Major, I know your father and I could not have believed it of you. I did not know it was in your blood to deceive a man at a time when it was easy to work on his feelings. This is all I have got to say, or ever will have to say to you. Send me them horses."

The season had sobered and browned; the flowers were dead and the leaves on the fig-trees in the gardens were dusty. The town was drowsy with the heat, and many of the well-to-do folk had gone to the springs in the hills, but the legislature was still busy, or pretended to be, grinding out new measures and repealing older ones. The season's

first bale of cotton had come in—the premature advance of the coming crop, picked here and there in the fields—and was hauled about town on a decorated wagon, driven by a negro with the plume of an iron weed in his hat, to the noise of a bell, vigorously rung by a boy who sat at the tail of the vehicle. This was done every year, but it always was an important event, cotton being the basis of all prosperity and the fabric of antebellum aristocracy. The merchant, hearing the bell, rushed to his door to gaze out; the lawyers lounging about the courtrooms left their musty proceedings to look from the windows, and even the sprinkling cart, driven by an "official" and therefore an unaccommodating man, turned out that the cotton wagon might pass.

The election was drawing near and the wire-workers were busy. News was daily brought in from all parts of the state and every one looked forward to the day of reckoning, sure to come. For a time after the affair beneath the magnolias in his garden, the Governor kept himself more at home, not that he was apprehensive of unusual danger,

for the word "fear" had been omitted from the lexicon of his youth and had not been inserted in the unabridged dictionary of his political life, but because he appeared more than ever to worry under the trials of office and the annoyances of the "log-rollers" who daily beset him. Often they swarmed about the house, knowing or feeling that his time was short, and therefore hoping to push their selfish schemes to fruition before his fall, but Jim turned them away with the warning to stay away, as the Governor was very busy. Occasionally at the cooling end of the day, the old man would go out for a quiet walk, choosing a way that led into the country. He took great pleasure in looking upon the ripening crops. Sometimes, preserving a strict incognito, he would walk beside a laborer, going home from his toil, and would talk to him as one who understood and sympathized. Once at a spring by the roadside, he came upon a half-grown boy, sitting thoughtfully upon a stone. The Governor sat down and opened up a conversation with him.

"Do you live far from here?" he asked.

"Over yonder," the boy answered, rubbing his sun-browned cheek.

"I suppose your folks are all interested in the coming election?"

"I reckon so, but I don't pay much attention to it. I'm trying to learn something, so I won't have to dig in the ground all my lifetime."

"Ah," said the Governor, "that's laudable."

"It's what?" the boy asked. The Governor repeated the word and the youngster seemed to make a mental note of it; it had evidently struck his fancy as a bit of learning, a bit of something that might help to keep him from digging in the ground, and he repeated it over and over to himself. After a time, under the Governor's kindly inquiry, he became communicative. He had walked into the neighborhood, he said, looking for work, and had engaged himself to a farmer. He hoped to get enough money to take him through school during the coming winter. His main trouble was that he couldn't get the books he needed; there were no books in the farmer's house. He had spent his last

penny for a worn history of the United States, which he found in a shop in the city, and he was afraid that he had gone beyond his means.

"How much does the farmer pay you?" the Governor inquired.

The boy moved about uneasily on the stone. "I'm afraid I didn't make a very good bargain," said he. "I agreed to work a while and then let him fix the price; but he hasn't said anything about it, and whenever I mention it he always says 'there will be time enough for that'."

"Where are you from?" the Governor asked.

The boy waved his hand. "From away off yonder."

"Have you any relatives living?"

"No, sir; my mother died a long time ago and my father was killed in the army."

It was of little use to ask him which army. His accent was of the South. "In what command?" the Governor inquired.

"Second Alabama Cavalry."

The Carpetbagger started. One of the sabers that

he had taken out into the moonlight a few nights before had belonged to a member of that command. He asked no more questions, but somehow he fancied that in the boy there was a resemblance of a man whose dead hand had gripped one of those swords. He looked far away, at the dusk of evening, gathering low down beneath the trees in the woods. "If you had money enough you could go away and find a better place, couldn't you?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; but it won't do to think about that."

"I take you to be honest?"

"Honest?" the boy repeated, and the Governor knew that his inquiry was answered. "Yes, sir, I think I am. Without honesty there wouldn't be much need for learning or anything else. No, sir; I don't want anything that don't belong to me."

"My boy," said the Governor, "I am going to help you."

"Will you?" he asked, brightening. "Have you got any work for me to do?"

"No; but I have a little money and I am going

to give it to you." He took some bank notes out of his pocket. "Here's forty dollars or so. Take it; you are welcome to it." The boy got up, staggering, but he did not reach forth his hand. "Take it. I think I knew your father—maybe not, but something strikes me that I did. Take it; it's yours." The child did not move, but stood gazing at him. "Take it and go North where work is more respected. There is no hope for a community where work is looked down upon." The Governor held out the money again, but still the boy did not stir. He seemed to be afraid—afraid, perhaps, that he was dreaming and would soon awake to feel the dread ache of disappointment.

"But I don't know you, sir," he finally managed to stammer, "and perhaps it wouldn't be right for me to—"

"Nonsense, my child! You needn't have any fear. It's all right. I am the Governor of this state."

The boy recoiled as if he had received a blow in the face. The glad light in his eyes died out. Without a word he turned around and walked rapidly away.

CHAPTER XXII

FACE TO FACE WITH HIMSELF

When he reached home, Jim was lighting the hanging lamp in the hall. The old negro shook his head dubiously. It was not often that he ventured to give advice to his master; but now he was emboldened to offer the opinion that it was imprudent on the Governor's part to walk out alone and to remain so long. The Carpetbagger smiled at the negro's caution. "That's all right, Jim," said he. "A man can't die till his time comes."

"I doan know 'bout dat, sah," Jim replied, shoving the lamp up as high as he could reach and then steadying the swinging chain. "I doan know 'bout dat. He mout not die till his time come; but he doan know how soon it gwine t' come, an' dar ain't no use gwine outen yo' way t' 'vite it t' come."

The Governor passed on into the drawing room, where dark portraits of long-forgotten faces, painted

by strolling Frenchmen, hung shadowy in the twilight. The house had not been built for an executive mansion, but was much more commodious than those usually set apart by legislatures for such purposes, having been the home of a very old family the last member of which had perished in the war. The estate was now in chancery, in more senses than one, the Governor's enemies often declared. He sat down near a window looking out across the yard toward the street and mused upon the happy and stately gatherings that must have been held in that room when the old South ruled the nation. There was one picture that had a fascination for him, that of a young man on a horse, surrounded by a group of negroes. It was a picture of the olden time, and it told of a day whose sun was forever set—a day that he himself had helped to go out, not with a lingering light of gold in the west, but to grow dark and die in a cloud. What a contrast to his own youth! How proud and happy was the face of the boy, and how full of admiration were the countenances of the negroes! Jim came in to light the chandelier.

"You needn't light up just yet," hastily interposed the Governor. "I—I like the darkness. Leave me alone."

Long he sat there rapt in meditation. The twilight shadows deepened about him. One by one the pictures faded out and the walls grew black. Low in the west a single star blazed fiercely just above the tops of the dark magnolias, which seemed to reach up to the sky.

"Who lighted that star?" he asked aloud, and started at the sound of his own voice. To his high-wrought imagination it seemed like a friendly signal fire, a heavenly beacon-light set to shape the wavering course of one who otherwise might go astray. "It doesn't give much light," he soliloquized, "but a man doesn't need much light to steer by if he really tries to go straight ahead."

Big Jim, perplexed and worried by the long continued silence in the darkened room, several times opened the door slightly; but no voice bade him enter and he softly withdrew in deeper anxiety than ever. The Governor was fighting the battle of his

life. Shrouded by the kindly mantle of darkness he was squaring accounts with his own soul and, figure the problem as he would, he could not strike an honorable trial balance except by crediting himself with a sacrifice such as no man in his position ever made before. It was a long, hard-fought battle. When it was ended, the Governor's furrowed cheeks were wet; but his personal accounts had been balanced.

"Mistah Willetts wants t' see yo', sah," suddenly announced Jim, evidently delighted by any legitimate excuse to interrupt the long silence. It was some time before the Governor made answer. When at last he did so, there was an unwonted note of firmness in his voice.

"Let him come in," he said.

"Shall I light up, sah?"

"No."

Willetts was greatly surprised when he found himself thrust forward into a room which was pitch dark save for a few straggling rays from a window which merely served to accentuate the blackness on either side.

"What are you doing?" he cried, familiarly. "Playing 'Love in the Dark'?"

"Find a chair and sit down," said a stern voice near the window. "Now, then, what do you want?"

"I called at the office several times this afternoon, Governor, but didn't find you in," Willetts began, "so I thought I'd run up for a few minutes to-night."

There was no response, except an inarticulate grunt from the darkness, which might have meant anything or nothing.

"The election is drawing near," continued the log-roller after a brief pause, "and the opposition is putting up so hot a fight that we can't afford to overlook a bet. It won't do to take any chances this time. I've been talking the matter over with some of the boys and we've rather agreed that the safest way for us is to handle the voting right from the start. A few soldiers stationed around each ballot-box would make the matter easy enough for us. Early in the day a few men ought to get shot—poor white trash would probably fill the bill all right.

Of course, we could show, you know, that there was an attempt made to seize the ballot-box and that the soldiers were forced to fire upon the mob to preserve the purity of the elective franchise. The effect would be immense."

Here Willetts slapped himself on the leg and laughed uproariously, as if he were thoroughly enjoying a good joke. But he had a monopoly of the merriment. "Better look after this, right away," he added, when his hilarity had subsided. "Have Lummers draw up an order for the troops tomorrow morning and start the ball rolling."

"And there's another matter, too," he went on. "We must have a fair and square returning-board to pass upon the election results. There is bound to be a good deal of illegal voting and a great many votes will have to be thrown out—some of the returns probably will have to be suppressed entirely —because of fraud, you understand. We've got to have the right men on that board."

"Humph!" growled the Carpetbagger. Willetts waited for him to say something further, but waited in vain and at length resumed the topic himself.

"The boys have gone over the whole ground pretty completely," he said, "and we're rather decided that Representative Felton would be a good man for you to name. He owes his election to you and he's after an appointment for his son-in-law, so he could be relied upon to stand by us. Then, there is Old Man Dabney. His seat is contested and he wouldn't dare go back on us. And the boys insist that I ought to take the third place myself. Personally, I'd rather have nothing to do with it, of course, but they seem to have set their minds on it and simply won't take 'no' for an answer. So I finally have told them that in deference to their wishes I'd waive my own feelings in the matter and would—"

"Jim!" called the Governor. The door was flung open instantly and a black giant stood framed in the light.

"Yas, sah."

"Show Mr. Willetts out."

CHAPTER XXIII

DRAWING HIM OUT

There was consternation in the camp of the Carpetbaggers. Willetts had lost no time in passing the word along the line that trouble was brewing. A caucus was hastily held in the gambler's rooms to consider the situation and map out a plan of action.

"All I can say is that the old man is acting queer," said Willetts, "and things begin to look squally. I can't account for it," he added, "unless he's gone wrong here," tapping his forehead significantly. "He must know that he can't scuttle the ship now without going down with us."

"It looks to me," said the Speaker of the House, a large, bald man with a deep voice, ears that stood out prominently and a nose that looked as if it had often suffered from frost-bite, "it looks to me as if Crance has struck something pretty good up North and is preparing to pull up stakes here and get out."

"Well, if that's so," chimed in Willetts, "the quicker we find it out the better."

"Why not plump it right at him?" suggested the Secretary of State, a tall, spare man with small eyes and a ministerial bearing.

"Good!" cried Willetts, with sarcastic emphasis. "You do it. I've had one seance with him and I'm through."

"We've got to get at him, some way, right off," commented the Speaker. "Why not get up a little dinner, invite him there and make him show his hand?"

This struck the conferees as the most feasible scheme, and, within a few hours, Governor Crance received a cordial invitation to dine with several gentlemen, that night, in one of the private banqueting rooms of the leading hotel.

The old Carpetbagger smiled. "No," he said, "I'm not at all hungry."

"But," it was urged, "there are many things to discuss before the election and a dinner party would afford an excellent opportunity for an exchange of views."

"Ah, that is a horse of another color," exclaimed the Governor. "If that's what you want, come up to the house to-night and take dinner with me." And so the matter was settled.

Shortly after nightfall, the chief cogs of the carpet-bag machine began to gather at the gubernatorial mansion. The Governor met them at the door and received them graciously. He shook hands with them, laughed and chatted, as if the whole election were a huge joke and he the point of it all. Then he bowed them into the old, black-walnut dining room where the dinner was served. At the foot of the table, opposite the Governor, sat Willetts. At the Carpetbagger's right was the State Auditor. He had been at the head of an insurance company, and report said that he did not care to return to the scene of his former operations. To him this life was a game, and everything that he could lay hands on without detection, and sometimes even with it, was fairly won. He and the Governor had been rather intimate, though of late they had been seen less together, and it had been said by a member

of the House that the Auditor had recently referred to the "old man" as a "fool, juggling with his chances." At the Governor's left sat a militia officer, resplendent in uniform and with a mild contempt for all civilians.

The dinner started out stupidly, with low conversation and the tip-toeing of servants. The talk was mainly grunts and acquiescences, nods and more grunts—the gathering of tired men, the half-hearted feeding of feverish stomachs, the closing scene of a long dissipation; but there is often an enlivening revival at the end of a dull debauch, and when the wine had been passed and tossed off time after time there was more animation. The Governor drank but little; he livened up, though, with the rest and joined in the noisy talk. They could hear Jim pacing slowly up and down the veranda. Nellie and Roy peeped in at the door, Nellie seeing the whole company, but the boy seeing nothing but the militia officer. Rain was falling. They heard it pattering on the dusty leaves.

"Has any one seen Old Man Reynolds since his

release from jail?" asked the Speaker. The Governor frowned over his wine; but the Speaker took no notice of it. "I don't quite agree with you, Governor, in that affair," he added, with a laugh.

"The old man is innocent," the Governor replied.

"But how do you know?" the Secretary put in. "The courts haven't decided and the whole case floats in mid air. The authorities seem afraid to touch it."

"It will probably always remain a mystery," said the Auditor.

The Speaker did not think that it was a mystery. Nearly everything rested upon evidence, he said, and evidence was strong against the old man.

The Governor looked at him and his eye was as searching as a camera, but he said nothing; he was thinking of the boy whom he had seen at the spring.

"The Northern papers have taken up the matter," said the Speaker. "They say that if that's the way we are going to reconstruct—"

"Drop it," the Governor broke in. "Have some more wine."

"But, really, Governor, it ought to be cleared up."

"It is cleared up, so far as that old man is concerned," said the Governor. "I don't give a snap for all the evidence you can bring."

The Speaker smiled. "Then what do you give a snap for?"

"The truth, sir."

"Well, how are we going to get at it?"

"We have got it now; the old man told it."

Willetts objected. He yielded to no man in respect for Old John Reynolds, he said, but he believed that sentiment should cut no figure in such a case. "Wiley Jones," he added, "was my friend. He did me many a good turn and I naturally feel his death very keenly. The only person who has even been suspected of this crime is a free man to-day and that, too, without establishing his innocence in court. I do not say that Reynolds killed Jones—what I believe doesn't matter, perhaps—but somebody killed him. If the old man didn't, who did?"

Here the militia officer gave his opinion. All civil courts were humbugs. If you want justice you

must go to the drum-head rather than to the bar. Men who made money by dealing out "justice" were necessarily corrupt, or at least full of tricks, the same as you would find it in any other business. What the entire country needed was a military government. When was England greatest and most feared by the nations of the earth? When the helm of state was grasped by the iron hand of Cromwell. The Secretary, being a lawyer by profession, took issue with him. The Auditor, being an industrious drinker, proposed a song. He said a song was more convincing than an argument. The Speaker thought that they ought to look seriously at the coming political crisis. "The election is almost here, you know."

"So it is," remarked the Governor. The Auditor wanted to know whether or not all the judges had been appointed and whether or not they could sing. The Auditor was drunk. The Speaker hoped that they might sing the right tune and in the right key. He looked at the Governor, expecting him to say something, but he did not. The Auditor began to

sing. The Speaker called him to order. "Wait a moment," he cried. "We are on a serious subject now. You must remember that we've got a government on our shoulders."

"You must want to be re-elected," said the Auditor. "I don't care how it goes. I want to go back to Wisconsin and catch some fish. Say, I've got a place on a lake there that's full of fish—muskellonge as long as a barrel stave. Let's all sing 'Home, Sweet—"

"Shut up; do be serious for a moment, won't you?"

"Oh, I've been serious long enough. I was shot at the other day and that was serious enough. Governor, that's good wine—must have found it in the cellar here. Everybody sing."

The dinner was to have been a "business meeting," but it seemed to be drifting away from its original purpose. Why a militia officer, a stranger who had no possible interest in their affairs should have been invited, the Speaker could not make clear unto himself. It was to have been a political conference, the discussion of vital interests, and why

the Governor was so free with his wine, the Secretary could not make out. Formerly such occasions had been feasts of state where important matters were discussed and disposed of and the heads of all the departments had been present to receive advice and instruction. There may have been songs, but no one would have dared to propose such a thing until the hour had grown too mellow for business. The Governor would not only have frowned upon it, but would have shut the door upon the offender. Now he laughed when the Auditor broke in upon every attempt to get down to business.

Jim paced up and down the veranda, and Nellie and Roy took an occasional peep into the dining room, the boy, wide-eyed in admiration of the militia man.

"In this life, who is it that deserves success?" said the Speaker.

Some one replied "the honest man," and there was a good-humored laugh. All eyes were turned upon the Governor, but he did not even smile.

"The honest man may be incompetent," said the Speaker. "Honesty isn't everything. Ability stands at the head of all virtues, in my opinion. Simple honesty may get one and one's friends into trouble; therefore honesty may be dangerous. No, sir; the man who plays his cards for all they are worth is the man who ought to win—in a political contest, for instance." He fixed his gaze on the Governor, who sat dreaming in a cloud of smoke. "I claim the man who is out for the stuff," said the Speaker, "is the fellow who ought to succeed. It is foolish for any one to throw away his own chances. When he throws away the chances of his friends, also, it is a crime." He fixed his gaze on the Governor.

The chief executive brightened suddenly. "I was out in the country to-day and I found excellent prospects for the coming crop," said he.

"A crime, I repeat," said the Speaker.

"This rain comes in good time," the Governor remarked, puffing his cigar.

"We saw the crop planted, but who will witness

the harvesting thereof?" said the Secretary, and the observation suited the gravity of his countenance.

"I don't think I shall," spoke up the Auditor, unsteady of head. "I feel myself slipping."

"None of us need to slip if the right thing is done," said the Speaker, significantly.

The Governor laid down his cigar and arose. "Gentlemen," he quietly remarked, "as the hour is growing late and you soon will have to leave us, perhaps it might interest you to know before going home that I have picked out the three members of the returning-board, which will pass upon the results of the forthcoming election."

A chorus of suppressed "Ahs" went up from all sides of the table.

"The first man I have chosen," he continued, "is Captain Jerome Pointer of Gum Springs."

"He's a Reynolds man!" shouted Willetts, excitedly.

"The second," calmly proceeded the Carpetbagger, "is Prof. Willis Maynard, state superintendent of public instruction."

The diners looked at each other in blank amazement. "He isn't a politician, at all," exclaimed the Secretary. "Shut up!" cried the Auditor, vainly trying to untangle his tongue. "If he's an office holder you can bet he's all right."

"And the third is a gentleman whom you all know and respect—Rev. Jacob Williams of the First Baptist church of this city."

Pandemonium broke loose in a moment. Amid the babel the Governor stood, smiling, until comparative quiet was restored. Then he raised his hand with a commanding gesture. "Gentlemen," he said, "I must now bid you good-night." Growling, muttering and cursing, the little party broke up in great confusion. There was no formal leave-taking.

At the door the Governor touched the militia officer's sleeve. "Wait," he said. A few moments later, when they were alone, the Carpetbagger handed the officer a fresh cigar and lighted one for himself. "Colonel," he said, "to-morrow you will receive from the Adjutant General your orders con-

cerning the disposition of troops at the polls. That there may be no misunderstanding I want to supplement those orders now by a few verbal instructions. You will detail two men for service at each polling place. You will instruct them to preserve order and prevent all demonstrations. You will also instruct them not to approach within a radius of three hundred feet from the ballot boxes. And you will order them to arrest any man who in any way, directly or indirectly, seeks to interfere with the right of every citizen to cast his vote as he pleases. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir; but—"

"You may omit the 'but'. There is no 'but' in this order. And if it is not carried out to the letter I shall hold you personally responsible. Do you understand that?"

The Colonel gave a formal military salute. "I always obey orders from headquarters," he said, as he arose to go.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GOVERNOR MEETS THE "BAD MAN"

Many a wise man has given himself over to the study of his own conscience, surprising himself with its many phases and unexpected complexions. And he who buffets the world and has in turn been buffeted by it, finds himself gazing into a kaleidoscope when he turns his eye inward; the colors may not be bright, but the shapes are many. It is hard for the honest man to find that he himself is disinterestedly honest. At one moment he may believe that he is so, but the fragments that go to make up his conscience tumble apart, readjust themselves and lo, there is a complete change. Honesty has its degrees, its morning, noon and night phases; but there is one quality in man that undergoes no change, a quality superior to conscience or honesty, —honor.

This train of thought was running through the

Governor's mind as he strolled slowly along a street in the residential part of the town. He argued that honor might stray off like a deer, to feed upon rich pastures in a strange land, and still like the deer, it might come back again to nibble the short grass of its native hill-side. He heard the talking of children, and halted to look at two little girls, playing in the corner of a fence. On the fence sat a boy, compassionately, and yet with a contemptuous sense of his superiority, looking down upon them. There were a number of dolls on diminutive chairs, little things made bright with ribbons and lace; and a short distance off, in a sort of pen made of bricks and stone, there was a hideous monster of a rag doll, with great charcoal eyes and a mouth of frightful width. It was a "man-doll," with a bull neck, an unsightly paunch and knock-knees. On his head he wore horns, made of the long thorns from a locust tree. The Governor spoke kindly and the girls looked up smilingly at him.

"You have a very pretty house and are very neat housekeepers," he said.

"It would be nice, but everything is upside down, now," said the larger of the girls. "We have so much trouble."

"With our young friend up here?" said the Governor, nodding at the boy.

"Oh, no, with the old 'Bad Man'," she replied.

"The 'Bad Man'?"

"Yes, there he is," and she pointed to the doll in the pen.

Then the younger child spoke. "He's all the time coming in and tryin' to take the little ones away. See the hair coming out of Lillie's head?" she added, pointing to a doll that was losing its yellow wool. "Well, he did that when we wasn't lookin'. He's the meanest thing."

"Why don't you have him killed?" the Governor asked, and the boy snorted.

"He can't be killed," replied the larger girl. "He has been shot oh, so many times; but it don't make no difference to him. He don't mind it at all. He eats bullets and powder and smacks his mouth and wants more."

"Ho," said the boy, "I could rip him all to pieces in a minute."

This was a brutal piece of iconoclasm, and the larger girl resented it. "Now what do you want to talk that way for, Billie. You are all the time tryin' to break up everything. I wish you'd go home."

"You call the old fellow over there the 'Bad Man'," said the Governor. "Hasn't he any other name?"

"Oh, yes," replied the child. "His other name is 'Governor Crance'."

The Carpetbagger winced. He not only saw the abhorrence in which he was held in the present, but saw himself in the future, pictured as a beast. These children, in the years to come, would tell their grandchildren of the monster who once made his den in the state house. The strong man may defy the opinion held to-day, for he can confront a charge and frown upon it; but he may nevertheless be afraid of the opinion forming, mist-like, away off yonder in the unnamed days to come.

There he cannot defend himself, and his helpless descendants must bear the odium of his misdeeds. The Governor, with his arms resting on the fence, and with an occasional look at the "Bad Man" in the pen, the thing now having a sort of fascination for him, mused over the little girls, knowing them to be ignorant that the namesake of their ragruffian was so near.

"But is this Governor Crance such a very bad man?" he asked.

"Awful," said the larger girl. "They have to watch him all the time. He goes out when the nights are dark and steals sheep, and he drags them into his den and sucks their blood out and then throws 'em away. And one night when an old man sat counting his money, a hand came in at the window and grabbed the money and the old man grabbed the hand, for it was all the money he had and he didn't know where to get any more; but the hand wouldn't let go, and neither would the old man, so he was dragged away out in the woods. And the next morning they found him in a sink

hole, with one of his hands cut off, and that day a man saw Governor Crance go to the window of the awful place where he stays and throw a hand out in the yard."

"Yes," the younger girl spoke up, "and when he blows his breath at a cow she can't give any more milk; and my uncle he had a cow and Governor Crance blowed his breath at her, and she couldn't give a drop of milk. She tried, and tried, but she couldn't."

The boy snorted. "Ho," he said, "I'd put a hole through him if he was to come blowin' his breath around any of my cows."

"You are awful brave, ain't you?" said the older girl, half tauntingly, and yet with the light of admiration in her eyes.

"I'm brave enough to put a hole through him," the boy replied, shaking his head; "and when I get big I'm going to do it, whether he blows his breath at my cows or not."

"If you shoot at him," said the smaller girl, "he'll catch the powder and throw it back at you."

The boy shouted. "Ho, catch the powder! Who

ever heard of catching powder! Girls don't know a thing, do they, Mister? Ho, catch the powder. You mean bullet."

"Well," she said, "it don't make any difference what he would catch, he'd catch it just the same, and he'd throw it back at you and kill you with it."

"How long since Brother Crance over there broke out?" the Governor asked, nodding at the rag-ruffian. The younger girl looked at the older one as if this were an important matter and should be answered after due deliberation.

"Yesterday," said the older girl. "Some visitors came, and while we were talkin' to 'em, we heard a screamin' and a loud bellow, and when we ran in here, the old 'Bad Man' had choked Mollie and Jennie nearly to death and had pulled Lillie's hair till she was blue in the face. It was all we could do to get him out, and as soon as we shut him up, he said he wanted a sheep to eat, a great, big, whole sheep; but we wouldn't give him a poor sheep that never did anybody any harm, so he's hungry yet, and we don't care if he starves to death."

On the opposite side of the street, not far away, there was a refreshment booth presided over by a fat German. The Governor asked the children if they would like to go over with him and eat ice cream. The boy tumbled off the fence, and the faces of the girls brightened. They went with him, the girls hanging to his arms, and the boy proudly marching in front as if he had inspired the expedition. When they sat down at a table the Governor told them that the entire establishment was theirs if they wanted it. They had liked him at first; now they were enchanted by him. The smaller girl gazed into his eyes and said that they were like her own grandpa's, always trying to laugh at something.

"What is your name?" the older girl asked.

"My name," said the Governor, with his eye on the proprietor, now bestirring himself in the execution of an order, "why, you may call me Mr. Oldfellow."

"What a funny name," cried the younger girl. "But you ain't funny. You are the bestest sort of a man, and I'm going to think of you when you are

not here, and when my uncle is Governor in place of the bad man that's there now, I'm goin' to make him give you a big dinner and all the people will be there and you'll be glad."

"Your uncle?" said the Governor. "What is his name? Not—er, Major Reynolds?"

"Ah, ha. He's my uncle, and when he's Governor—"

"Let us have all the different kinds of cake you have," said the Governor, breaking in upon her as the proprietor came near. "Yes, bring us everything you've got. Cover the table."

"Ain't he good!" cried the older girl.

The proprietor shrugged his heavy shoulders. "I vould say he vos. Und you don'd know who vas doin' all deese, hah? It vas nod everypody dat had ice cream und cake bought by de Gof—"

The Carpetbagger lifted his hand. "Don't," he said.

The proprietor understood and bowed as he went back to where his wife stood wiping dishes. "A man vot can ketch de leetle ones, like dot," he remarked, "can't be so bat in de heart."

CHAPTER XXV

FOOD FOR SCANDAL

When the feast was done, the Governor bade his little friends good-bye, the smaller girl putting up her lips to be kissed, and strode full of thought along the street. He pictured the horrified change that would have spread over the faces of the children had the German told them that it was the Carpetbagger who had ordered the feast. He could see the boy scampering off, to save himself, and could hear the two girls begging for mercy. "And this is America," he soliloquized. He passed along by the post-office, still musing, with no thought for the scenes about him, when he was called out of the depths by a soft voice at his side. He looked up and a flush flew to his face as he met the gaze of the widow Fairburn. She had just come out of the post-office, for she had a letter and a newspaper in her hand.

The Governor was surprised, not indeed to find her there, for everyone went to the post-office, but surprised that she should speak to him where every eye could see her, where every look would be a reproach. He bowed to her, halting thoughtfully to let her pass on, and murmured something which sounded like "delighted to see you, Madam." But she did not go; she stood face to face with him, looking with frankness into his eyes, and though he turned neither to the right nor to the left, yet he knew that the passers-by were casting reproachful glances upon her. It was embarrassing; he would not thus expose her to the censure of her friends. Bowing again, he moved off and was surprised to find that she was walking beside him. True they were neighbors and had talked across the fence; they were more than neighbors, for she had given him a rose, and one evening he had walked home with her, bidding her good-night at the door of her house; but she had never invited him to enter that house, had never encouraged him to recognize her when they met by chance in the street. Many a

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time she had passed without raising her eyes, without even showing by her countenance that she knew he was near. So, what could be the meaning of this bold recognition? He slackened his pace to let her walk on, and she walked slower; he quickened his steps to pass her, and she moved along beside him.

"Mrs. Fairburn," he exclaimed, hastily, "have you forgotten that I—? Don't you know that your friends will—?"

"Yes, I know," she replied. "But there are considerations higher than the approval of friends. A duty can sometimes be so strong and imperative as to put every friend in the background."

"I don't understand, Mrs. Fairburn." He glanced at her and saw her eyes, full of a soft light, turned toward him.

"Governor, I heard something about you yesterday, and I determined then that I would thank you, no matter where I might meet you or who might be displeased."

"Heard something? Well, you can't always believe what you hear, you know."

"But I can believe what I heard yesterday. I know that you have turned over to a committee of our citizens—men whose honesty cannot be questioned—two hundred thousand dollars to found an orphan asylum for the state. I want to thank you."

"No; let me thank you," he replied.

She caught her breath, and they walked some distance before another word was spoken. "Our roads lie in the same direction," she said. They were going toward home.

"I hope that our paths may never cross," he replied, without looking at her, and they walked on a long distance without speaking.

"Mrs. Fairburn," he said, at length, "a conscience encouraged to clear itself of a weight, ought to feel thankful. I know one that does."

"Governor," replied the widow, "the seed of reformation lies in the soil of every conscience."

"Ah, but it may not sprout till water is gently poured upon it. Then let that conscience thank the hand that poured the water. Mrs. Fairburn, a conscience is sometimes a sort of Central Africa and has not within it the germ of self-civilization."

They were now at the gate. She halted and after a few moments' silence, said: "Won't you—won't you come in?" Had it cost her an effort? He thought so, and hesitated.

"Do—er—do you mean it?"

"I never say things that I do not mean."

He stepped in at the gate, she beside him, and silently walked along the paved pathway that led up to the steps of the old mansion. There were rocking chairs on the veranda, but she did not ask him to sit down there; she led him into the old-fashioned parlor where there was a cool, sweet smell. He glanced about the room, so full of the wasteful richness of the past: the heavy furniture brought from foreign lands, paintings from Italian walls, and an old grand piano which once had been the marvel of the community. The Governor fancied that he could almost smell the music in it, and he sat down, with his mind on the wheezing melodeon in the cheerless "best room" of the farm-house where he had lain, cold and miserable, "up chamber," listening to a tune that was intended as praise to the Lord.

"I used to think that all the sweet tunes came like a perfume from the South," he said. "And they seemed to come of a summer evening, just after a rain."

"Why, Governor," she said, with brightening eyes, "you are really sentimental. Your old home must still be warm in your heart."

He shook his head. "My heart could have made a home warm, but I had no home." He looked through the window at the whitewashed negro cabins in the distance. "Out there they used to sing and dance at night," he said; "but with us there was no song. We worked so hard that when darkness came we dropped down to sleep; and, even on Sunday, the sun shining through the roof was sometimes a mockery of freedom, calling upon us to get up and work with the cattle. But it was a great luxury to lie in bed till after the sun had come up, and it could not be hoped for except on Sunday."

Her eyes were full of sympathy. "I remember an old song," he went on, slowly rocking in the soft chair. "Something about the 'Yellow Rose of Texas'. Won't you sing it for me?"

She went to the piano and the first note she touched sent a thrill through him. Her voice was low and rich, suited, he thought, to the paintings on the wall. He forgot his office, forgot the war, the blood shed by brothers. In the world there was nothing but melody. He did not know when she ceased to sing but, looking through a mist, he saw that she had turned upon the stool and was facing him. He had not dreamed enough, had not forgotten enough of the war and of the blood of the son on the shirt of the father. "Sing again," he whispered, leaning back in his chair. "Sing an old tune—something so gentle and peace-loving that it did not dare to lift its head during our storm."

She understood him. She knew that he was trying to forget, that he found a sweetness in putting a blight on the present. Again and again she sang and he floated away in a warm sea of melody. The tavern bells clanged the hour for supper. He got up and held out his hand. "I want to thank you for one of the happiest days of my life." She smiled as she took his hand, and something in that

smile told him that she was sorry for him, nothing more. Had it not been for that pitying smile he might have said something that had crept into his heart, but now he drove it out almost resentfully.

The command of "guide, right," came from the street and, looking out, they saw a company of militia passing. It had all come back now—the memory of the war, the adventure on the one hand and the insult of the Reconstruction period on the other.

"Yes," he repeated, "a very enjoyable time. I wish you good-evening, Madam."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MAJOR FILES AN OBJECTION

Later in the evening, when the swallows had ceased to skim through the dusky air, the card of Major Reynolds was brought in to Mrs. Fairburn. She greeted him warmly when he came into the room, telling him how glad she was that he had called, and added that he had almost forgotten her during the push and struggle of the campaign. When a lamp had been lighted and she could see his face, however, she knew that something must have gone amiss, and she remembered then that he had said nothing since he sat down stiffly.

"The campaign will soon be over," she said. "And then, of course, I shall see no more of you."

He turned his eyes upon her; a frown was traced upon his brow. "Has anything gone wrong, Major?"

He cleared his throat. "Decidedly, Madam."

"Indeed! May I ask what it is?"

"You shall know. A few moments ago, while in a drug store, I was deeply grieved to hear that you had been seen in front of the post-office, talking to Governor Crance; that you had not only encouraged him to talk to you, but that you permitted him to walk home with you. I said that it could not be true; I could not believe it."

"But you must have believed it, Major. Your face and the tone of your voice tell me that you did believe it."

"Ah, but your face and the tone of your voice tell me that it is all a mistake," he replied.

"It is true," she said.

"You acknowledge it?"

"If it's true, why shouldn't I acknowledge it?"

"Ah, but why should it be true? How could you so scandalize your state and your family? I ask you that. How could you?"

"Major," she said, slowly, "a good man deserves little credit for doing right. It is his nature to do so. But one who for any reason has gone astray deserves a great deal of credit if he makes an honest

effort to reform. Such a man deserves our sympathy. He deserves something more than our sympathy; he commands our aid, our support, our grateful recognition."

"If you are going to defend him I will not stay to—"

"Wait. I am not defending the past record of Governor Crance. I know that he represents a bad cause. But I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that of late he has done deeds meet for repentance."

"But think of yourself," the Major insisted. "And consider who he is and what he represents. Think of your standing in this community. Alice, I have known you all my life and I speak to you with an authority of long friendship. I know the goodness of your heart, but you must not allow it to blind your judgment or to mislead your discretion. You are rich, honored, respected; he is poor, despised, reviled and it is believed that to gain a political advantage he has not hesitated to put an unspeakable outrage upon my family."

"You don't believe it, Major," cried Mrs. Fair-

burn, hastily. "You know it isn't true. Have you forgotten that night among the magnolias? Has the memory of that man's generosity faded from your mind?"

The tall Southerner winced. "I am willing," he said, "to give him full credit for everything that—"

"Then, why should not I? I believe—I have good reason to believe—that this man whom you despise is not a bad man at heart, but a victim of circumstances and environment. That he has done wrong I grant, but I know he is capable of better things. You and I, Major, should make it easy, not make it difficult, for him to reform. He has turned over to a committee two hundred thousand dollars to—"

"Yes, I've heard of that," broke in the Major, impetuously, "and it's well enough in its way. But where did he get the money? Whose money is it? Did he bring it here with him? Did he save it out of his salary? Didn't the money belong to the state? And if so, has he done so virtuous a thing in—"

"Yes, he has, Major. It shows that he is trying to make amends. It shows that he is not lost to honesty and to honor."

"Alice," he said, "I have always held you up as the model woman of the South—the model woman of the World. But I cannot approve of your action to-day. A thief may be repentant, and may do good, but we must not lose sight of the fact that he has been a thief."

"There once was a thief on a cross," remarked the widow.

"Yes," replied the Major, "and in my opinion he has done more real harm in the world than all other thieves combined. He is the emblem of eleventh hour repentance."

She was shocked and did not hesitate to tell him so. He had presumed to question the wisdom and the mercy of the Son of Man, and she thought him little better than a blasphemer. He bowed his head under her rebuke and apologized, acknowledging that it was sinful of him, and hoped that she would forget it.

"I may have been indiscreet," she said, "but I did what I thought was right." A brightening change spread over the Major's countenance. "Now you are the girl I knew so well years ago," said he. "And really, Alice, I can't see that you have grown any older."

They heard Roy in the hall, commanding a column of imaginary soldiers. "Doesn't that sound like it?" she said. "Doesn't a son large enough to command an army make me seem older?"

"Not a bit," he maintained. Taking her by the hand, he said: "Come, sing something for me. There is not a voice in the world that pleases me as yours does. Sing 'Lorena'."

She sang for him and he stood beside her, with his mind in the past, the bright and careless days of his youth. He heard the banjo's ring and caught the glow of the Christmas fire in the cabin. Again he was borne in triumph upon the shoulders of a black giant, held up to be worshipped as the coming master. Ah, how different from the past brought back by the Carpetbagger!

The Major did not ask her to sing again when the song was ended. He led her gently to a chair, and when she had sat down, giving him a smile which, as much as the song, spoke of old days, he took a seat near her and looked into her eyes till she colored under his gaze.

"Alice," he began, "you know my history as well if not better than I could tell it to you. You know why I never married." She looked at him and slowly nodded as the past came back to her—the mourning of a neighborhood for a girl thrown from a horse and killed. One week from the time when she lay, amid the blossoms and the roses of April, young Reynolds was to have led her to his father's house. It was a hard blow and his friends feared that his reason had been shaken. With a physician he had roamed in foreign lands, and for years after his return, lived as one to whom life was a heavy load. She remembered it all, and her eyes were soft as she looked upon him. It was the first time he had ever alluded to his bereavement.

"Yes," she said, "I know."

"Time has mellowed that sorrow into something sweet," he remarked, almost in a whisper. Then he was silent, leaving her to wonder why he had brought back that part of the past.

"Alice."

"Yes, Major."

He took her hand as he had taken it years ago, on their way to school, to help her across a rivulet—he took her hand and held it, still looking into her eyes.

"In the years that are gone, there was no romance between us."

"No, Major. We were always good friends."

Slowly she began to withdraw her hand from his, but he held it. "Of late, after all these years, I have thought that we might be more to each other. We both have looked upon withered roses; we have breathed their perfume in the chamber of death; but roses are for the living as well as the dead."

"Major, I don't—don't quite understand," she said, withdrawing her hand, but without taking her eyes from his. "Roses for the living? Yes, they are planted and cared for by the living."

"Ah, and they should be enjoyed by the living. At my house there is a wilderness of them, without a mistress."

"And my garden is full of them," she said.

"Yes, but they have no master."

"The rose needs neither a master nor a mistress," she replied. "It needs but one true servant,—Sentiment."

"Alice, I could esteem no one so much as I do you. I believe that a new career is opening for me, and alone, it would be but half a career. Will you not share it with me? Don't answer impulsively. Don't answer now. But when I am Governor, I shall ask you to be my wife."

He arose to take his leave. She went to the door with him, and as they stood there in a silence, full of meaning for both, they heard the merry laughter of Nellie and Roy, off somewhere in the perfume of night.

CHAPTER XXVII

A FADED ROSE

One afternoon a few days before the election Governor Crance was busily engaged in clearing up the business of his office when Mrs. Fairburn's card was brought in.

"I know you are very busy, Governor," she said, a moment later, as she entered the room with a smile and a word of friendly greeting, "but I hope you will pardon this intrusion. I want to see you about a matter in which I know we both are deeply interested."

"It would be impossible, Madam, for you to intrude upon me," replied the Governor, warmly. "You are always welcome and I am entirely at your service."

"Thank you," she said. "I will detain you only a moment. I have here a message which I am going to deliver to Old Mrs. Reynolds and I would

like to talk with you about the case as it now stands against her husband, before I see her."

"Let me send up the message for you," suggested the Governor.

"Thank you; but I don't feel like troubling you to that extent."

"Nonsense!" cried the Carpetbagger. "Here, Lummers. Take this note up to the Reynolds plantation. If there is an answer, wait for it." He took a letter from the widow's hand and hurried the secretary off, glad to have an opportunity to talk with his fair visitor alone.

"Governor," she began, as soon as the footsteps of Lummers died away, "I fully appreciate the nobility of character you have displayed toward Major Reynolds in this campaign and I believe I understand all that this course has cost you. I want to thank you for what you have done. Few men in any walk of life ever were called upon to make so heavy a sacrifice for the right as you have made. And few would have had sufficient moral courage to do it. The election, of course, rested absolutely

in your own hands. When you decided that the troops should not be used to intimidate our voters at the polls, when you named a non-partisan returning board and declared that every vote honestly cast should be honestly counted, you elected your political opponent and deliberately defeated yourself. No general upon the field of battle ever won a greater victory."

The Carpetbagger made no reply. He gazed fixedly out of the window, though he saw nothing there.

"Major Reynolds," she went on, "already is elected. There can be no question on that point. The balloting will be merely the ratification of a result already known. Governor, I am anxious that the case against Old Mr. Reynolds should be settled while you still remain in office. You can readily understand why, I am sure."

"Yes, Mrs. Fairburn," quietly replied the Governor, "I think I do. The legal vindication of Old Mr. Reynolds at this time would remove a stain, however undeserved, from the name of my suc-

cessor. My detectives already have instructions to do everything in their power to clear this matter up at once. I am more than willing to do this; I want to do it. You may rest assured that I shall do everything I can for Major Reynolds, for I know that what I do for him I do for you."

The widow started slightly and a faint suggestion of a blush glowed upon her cheeks.

"I—I—am afraid I don't quite understand you," she said.

The Governor faced her squarely. "Oh, yes you do," he responded firmly. "I know that the election of Major Reynolds will bring him a far greater honor than the governorship of this state. I understand that; and it's all right."

It was now Mrs. Fairburn's turn to remain silent. She nervously fingered some letters upon the desk before her, but made no attempt to speak.

"Mrs. Fairburn," continued the Carpetbagger, after an awkward pause, "though this is not the last time, I hope, that I shall see you, it may be the last opportunity I shall have to say something to you

that I must say before I go back to Chicago. Throughout the city, even now, you will meet little bands of marchers celebrating the election of Major Reynolds in advance of the returns. You will hear them shout for 'home rule' and 'honesty in elections,' and you will hear them hoot at the Carpetbag regime. There speaks Mississippi. And I want you to know that if the state is benefited by my overthrow, she is your debtor to that extent, for you did it."

"No, no," hastily interposed the widow. "You must not say that."

"Why not? It's the truth; and I want you to know it. During all the weary months I have been here only one woman in the whole state of Mississippi has ever spoken to me in kindness—just one. Only one has ever held out to me any incentive to do better, any thought of responsibility or any hope for the future. This is your work, Madam. The credit for it is yours, not mine."

He arose and strode moodily up and down the room several times. Suddenly he stopped before

her. "Do you see that face upon the wall?" he demanded, pointing to an old oil portrait of Andrew Jackson. "Do you know the platform upon which he stood? He was a Southerner; do you know what he taught us of the North? 'To the victors,' he said, 'belong the spoils'. That was his political creed; when I came here, I made it mine, and for me 'spoils' meant 'plunder'. Don't tell me that this was wrong. I know it now. But I didn't know it then and I might never have known it at all but for you."

Mrs. Fairburn evidently was moved. "I can't let you talk like that," she said. "You are the one who deserves all credit for what has been done and this is particularly true because I know you have been actuated by no thought of yourself, no hope of reward."

"No; you're wrong," interposed the Governor. "All our acts, I think, are based on selfishness. I have hoped for a reward, Mrs. Fairburn. I want your esteem."

"Esteem is no just reward, Governor, for what you have done. You deserve far more than—"

"I deserve nothing—nothing that my conscience doesn't give me. Mississippi to-day has every dollar I ever took from her wrongfully—and more. And I don't feel like a repentant thief, either. I believed I was right. I thought I could stand safely on the platform laid down by that idol of the South, Old Hickory himself. It was a mistake. Jackson's platform never was a license to plunder; I know it now."

"You have acted nobly—grandly!" cried Mrs. Fairburn, with genuine admiration beaming from her eyes.

"I am going back to Chicago, Mrs. Fairburn," continued the Carpetbagger, slowly and with evident emotion, "to begin the fight all over again—the battle of life. I'm not afraid of the future at all. That will take care of itself. I have abandoned political life without a regret; I have beggared myself without a protest; I have turned over this commonwealth to Major Reynolds without a contest. Hate me if you want to; despise me if you will; but I can't go back to Chicago—and I won't—without

telling you that, if I felt in my heart that I were worthy of you, I'd fight the whole state of Mississippi to a standstill before I would give you up."

The ensuing silence was oppressive. There was a suspicious moisture in the widow's eyes as she arose unsteadily and extended her hand. "I'll have to be going," she said. "I'm afraid your clerk isn't coming back at all."

She went out softly and the Governor, standing as one in a dream, slowly drew from his pocket a wrinkled envelope and took from it a faded rose.

CHAPTER XXVIII

IN A DEAD MAN'S HAND

The election was near at hand. Throughout the country districts the air was scented with barbecued pig and sheep roasted whole, and in the town the night was sleepless with the blare and the snort of the brass band. Old politicians, keen to jump back into the harness and jingle the trace-chains of self-importance, predicted that there was to be a sweeping victory for "Democracy" unless the enemy held in reserve a trick to spring at the last moment. But as the judges of election had to all appearances been fairly appointed, it was not likely that any decisive trick could be devised. Besides, it did not seem to be the Carpetbagger's desire to win by fraud. He had held the state in the hollow of his grasping hand, and surely he could have kept it there, for nothing had really occurred to weaken his power—nothing except the concessions which he himself had granted.

In the glow of a noon when the air was close, the Major halted in at Mrs. Fairburn's gate. The widow was sitting in a hammock swung across the veranda. She waved her fan at him and asked him to come in. He had not the time for so luxurious a pleasure, he said; there was work for him to do, at the committee rooms in the hotel, but he could not resist the temptation to linger for a moment. He stood in the cool shade of a vine, and seemed to be in no haste to get at his important work.

"A few days ago," said he, "it was my earnest desire to be elected; now it is more than a desire—it is an enthusiasm."

"Then a distant view did not lend a false enchantment to the office," she replied, laughing.

"No, the closer I get, the more attractive it becomes."

"Why, Major?"

Her woman's instinct told her why, but she could not have helped asking. Naturally he expected the question, but of course pretended astonishment that she should not know why.

"The office is brighter, now, Alice, because I have a hope that you will share it with me."

"Why, Major," she said, somewhat flustered, "don't talk so loud. Some one might hear you."

He bowed over the gate and said that he would respect her caution. "But," he added, "I would like to shout it from the dome of the state house."

"They would think that you were making a political speech," she said.

He shook his head. "No, not a political speech, for there can be nothing politic where the heart is so deeply concerned. A man may set his mind upon an office; his heart is reserved for something nobler. But as I said before, you must not decide impulsively. When I am Governor I shall expect your answer."

He bowed again and passed on, and just at that moment, a negress, employed by Mrs. Fairburn as a laundress, came around a corner of the house, wringing her hands and moaning. Mrs. Fairburn, full of sympathy, besought her to tell the cause of her distress, but the poor woman was so overcome

by grief that it was some moments before she could speak. Then she said that Zeb, her husband, had been found murdered, with a knife wound in his breast. On the night before, he had gone to meet a man who owed him some money—she did not know the name of the man—and had been stabbed to death in Thompson's lumber yard.

"I doan want him t' be buried by no charity," said the woman. "I want t' borry enough money t' pay fur de funeral; an' I doan know when I kin pay you, but I want you t' take dis yere watch an' keep it till I fetches de money back t' you."

She took a gold watch from her bosom and held it out to Mrs. Fairburn. "I don't want your watch, Minerva. I will let you have the money, but I couldn't think of—"

"Yessum, you mus'. You got t', 'case I doan know whut t' do wid it no how, fur it's too fine fur me."

"Let me see it," said Mrs. Fairburn, taking the watch. She opened it and looked up with a start. "Where did you get this? Tell me the truth."

"Yassum, I'll tell you de truf ez de Lawd is my jedge. My husband he gib it t' me."

"Do you know where he got it?"

"No'm, I doan know, but de white pusson dat he works fur mus' er gib it t' him in pay fur his work."

"Do you know whom he worked for?"

"No'm. He neber tole me much er bout his er fairs. No'm, I doan know."

"I'll let you have the money and keep the watch," said the widow kindly. Gently drawing the sorrowing negress down upon the veranda she questioned her long about all phases of the affair and particularly inquired about the watch.

Then she sent the woman away with the money under her apron, chanting a negro's improvised dirge as she crossed lots in the direction of home. Reaching there, her chant was merged into the mourning song sung by her friends, gathered at the house. Jim looked in at the door and stood shaking his head. Early that morning a man had come running to tell him that Zeb was dead in Thomp-

son's lumber yard, and he had hastened over there to see for himself. The news had not yet been spread, the body having just been found, and Jim saw the murder in all its ghastly newness. He approached cautiously, looking at the dead man's upturned face. Then he looked at the right hand, shut tight, and stood there, pop-eyed with a discovery. Bending over he took something from the dead man's hand. As he looked at it an ashen pallor overspread his swarthy face, his knees trembled and his teeth chattered like castanets. He carefully put it away in his pocket and hastened away. He returned when the coroner came, but said nothing of his discovery. He walked about in deep thought, shaking his head. He was related to the newly-made widow, and went to her house to mourn with her; but he did not even tell her of the thing which he had found in the dead man's hand.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE CHECK THAT CONSCIENCE DRAWS

Several members of the legislature, who had been unusually active in state affairs during the Carpet-bag regime, were missing. Rumor said they had gone abroad for their health, albeit they had grown fat and waxed strong through feeding at the public's expense. The rats had begun to desert the sinking ship; those who remained did so in order to make one last plundering attack upon whatever could be found in the old worm-eaten hulk.

Willetts sent for Lucy Linford. He knew he had reached the end of his rope and that he no longer had any influence whatsoever with the chief executive. Daily conferences with the lethargic Lummers had confirmed this beyond question, even if additional confirmation were needed. He knew that henceforth whatever was accomplished by him must be done vicariously and he turned to the

schoolbook lobbyist as the most effective tool available.

"What is the use of trying to push this matter right in the midst of the election excitement?" demurred old Steve's agent. "Why not wait a while? If the election goes against him, he will still be Governor for a while, won't he?"

Willetts snorted. "You may understand schoolbooks," he cried, "but you don't understand Mississippi. Now, listen and follow me closely. The moment the election returns are in, the Carpetbag government will explode. Those law-makers will take to the woods like scared rabbits. They've been sitting there now eight months in violation of all law, crawling over each other in their efforts to push through a few more schemes before the crash comes. Our people won't pay us a cent so long as there is any loophole in this bill which will enable the next administration to undo it. They demand that it shall not only be signed by the Governor, but also that the fact shall be recorded in both houses before they will cash in for us. We must get the

old man's name and we must get it, too, before this legislature lets go. Understand?"

"Yes."

"Get him—somehow. I don't care how. You can do more with him than I can. You are a woman. You know what that means."

The lobbyist shook her head dubiously. "I'll see what I can do," she remarked, "but I'm not at all sanguine about the matter. He won't melt—I've tried him and I know. We've got to take another tack this time. Leave me alone with him for a few minutes and I'll try to land him. Have Lummers keep everyone else away so that I'll have a clear field."

This was a matter easy of accomplishment. Lummers was expecting her when she called. "Tell the Governor a lady wishes to see him, Jim," he said. "No name—just a lady. I'm going to step up to the senate chamber for a moment. Don't let anyone in till I get back."

The Governor entered briskly from his private office with a number of papers in his hand. He

stopped abruptly as he recognized the caller. She was all smiles.

"Are you surprised?" she inquired.

"Um-no," was the hesitating response. "I'm not surprised at anything nowadays—haven't time."

Lucy motioned toward a chair. "May I sit down?" she asked.

"Certainly."

She indicated another chair. "Won't you?"

"It is hardly worth while. I am very—"

"Oh, come, be sociable just a minute. You're not afraid of me, are you?"

The Carpetbagger shook his head. "I'm afraid of myself," he said, as he took a seat across the room from his visitor.

"Governor, how is your memory?"

"Bad—very bad."

"You haven't forgot what you told me the other night, have you?"

"No. I told you 'good bye'."

The lobbyist bit her lip. "You have a positive genius," she remarked, "for forgetting things you

ought to remember and remembering things you ought to forget."

"Oh, I don't know about that. There are a great many things I'd like to forget and can't."

"I hope you haven't tried to forget the Midland bill."

"No."

"Thank you."

"I forgot that without trying."

There was a marked change in Miss Linford's demeanor at once. She altered her tactics instantly. All attempts at fascination were at an end; verbal fencing was abandoned; she did not smile now.

"Governor," she said forcefully, "you understand your business or you wouldn't be where and what you are. I think I understand mine. I'm a business woman now; let's talk business."

The Carpetbagger shifted uneasily in his chair but made no reply.

"In politics," she went on, "there is nothing sadder than an official suicide—like this."

"Well, I'm not on ice yet."

"You've killed yourself. Don't you think you ought to save enough now to pay your funeral expenses?"

"Don't let that worry you."

"You have pulled down the temple. What have you gained? You have thrown away the Governorship; you have thrown over your party and defeated your friends. Now what? Do you expect to live here among these people whom you have robbed for years? You can't do it. Do you expect to go back to Chicago? How will you do that—walk back—without a cent?"

"If a man is 'broke' it doesn't make much difference where he is, does it?"

"The election is a mere waste of time. What's the use? The moment the returns are in, however, the legislature will adjourn. Then it will be too late. Your name—right now—is worth $50,000. Sell it."

She was leaning toward him eagerly, looking straight into his eyes, and every word was uttered with the force of a hammer blow. The Carpet-

bagger leaned back in his chair, looked toward the ceiling and crossed his hands behind his head. "Do you remember," he slowly asked, after a brief interval of silence, "in that old school-reader there was a quotation from an older book: 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches?' I'm afraid you haven't got that in your new books."

"Bosh!"

"Think so?"

"Yes, I do think so. Better men than you have done worse things. You mustn't let a sentimental whim wreck all your chances for the future. It would be a crime. We haven't a moment to lose. You have only one chance left—don't let it slip. You owe this to yourself; you owe it to your daughter. Think of her future and—"

The Governor sprang to his feet. "Hold on now!" he cried. "You've gone far enough. I have heard you; now you hear me. When I came down here, I came just as you did—to plunder. And I did it. There is no future in that. I've tried it. I know. Mississippi today has every dollar that I

took from her. I have given her back her money; she has given me back my conscience."

A sneer hardened the woman's face. "Will that pay a board bill?" she asked ironically. "You can't cash your conscience at the bank."

"Any check that conscience draws—whether it is ever paid or not—will be honored everywhere."

"Oh, sentiment sounds as pretty as anything in your old school-reader, but you'll find you can get along a good deal better on three meals a day. Be sensible."

Suddenly the Governor turned upon her. "Sensible?" he cried. "No sensible man ever is dishonest. Let me tell you that whenever a man tries to strike out the enacting clause of the Ten Commandments he is headed for—"

Nellie and Roy came bounding into the room. Seeing Miss Linford engaged with the Governor they stopped short and prepared to beat a hasty retreat.

"Come in!" cheerily called the Carbetbagger. "Come right in. How are you, Captain? It's all right; this lady has finished her business."

The lobbyist reluctantly rose. "I didn't say I had finished my business with you," she snarled.

"Didn't you?" gaily responded the Governor as he took Nellie's curly head between his hands and kissed her forehead. "Well, I did."

CHAPTER XXX

A GOOD TIMEPIECE

It was election day, and all places of business were closed; election, the first held by the people since the old days, when the "eagle orator" and the "silvery tongued" set forth the wrongs of the nation and the woes of the state.

At night a rain had fallen, there was no dust, and the air was cool. Crowds were gathered about the polling places, every one expecting blood to be shed, though wise men stood about to give counsel to hot heads. "We have lost a mighty issue by blood, and blood will not win us an election," said an old man, a lawyer who had sat upon the supreme bench of the country. Occasionally rough hands were laid upon a "repeater," to choke him, to beat him and to drag him off. The brass bands were still snorting, and ambitious young orators stood at public places, welcoming the day of deliverance.

The Carpetbaggers had not given up the fight. They knew that the party in power always has a chance, for possession in politics means quite as much as it does in law. But the shrewder ones knew that the old carpetbag would not hold straw after this day; they did not have to look to know it; they felt it, the atmosphere was against them. The legislature did not take a recess, each member being interested in a selfish measure, and, fearing that his time was short, continued to harangue and to struggle. How lawless a gathering under the protection of the law! Never again was the country to see its semblance, the scrambling end of a riotous misrule.

It was a revolution. Negroes, tremulous with the newness of suffrage, stood about astonished, ballot in hand, the voice of the people in the palm of yesterday's slave. The negro was not yet the white man's enemy. He had with strange fidelity taken care of the mistress and the little ones while the master fought, and there was a kindly remembrance of it; but now had come the beginning of the long and bitter struggle between the Anglo-

Saxon and the African. The old ruler of the soil could forgive the negro's freedom, but he could not forgive his vote, unless he should vote with the native whites, and that his gratitude toward his Northern liberators could not permit him to do. It might have been a false gratitude, or rather a blind gratitude, but that was for him to decide.

The hope of the Carpetbaggers lay with the negro, but the freedmen were new as voters and could not be sufficiently organized. By eleven o'clock, the Democrats knew that Reynolds was far in the lead, but there were several "heavy negro districts" to hear from and the outcome was not certain. The legislators took fresh hope. They had received encouraging news, but their spirits flagged at noon, dashed by a dispatch which simply read: "The negroes don't know what they are doing. It looks bad." Then the scramble began anew.

Early in the day, the gentler element of society had retired from sight, behind closed doors, expecting that there would be trouble, but later the embarrassment was thrown off and the women came out to see the "struggle for new freedom."

Gov. Melville Crance was the coolest and the calmest man in the little capital city of Mississippi. The election of Major Reynolds was over, except the shouting, and the shouting itself had begun. As the day wore on, the pent up feelings of the people could no longer be restrained. The streets were thronged by excited citizens, singing, cheering and laughing with all the careless exuberance and enthusiasm of college boys out for a lark. Little bands of marchers, keeping step to fife and drum, went about the city shouting the glad tidings of the political regeneration at hand.

The saloons were closed, but the whiskey bottles were not, and the ardent spirits of the marchers were accentuated by the ardent spirits they consumed en route.

Toward night, the demonstrations became louder and more boisterous. The feeling of respect for the Carpetbagger, due to his unexpected attitude toward his political antagonist, was beclouded by the fumes of liquor. He either was crazy, they said, or else he had struck something better up North. At any rate he deserved no consideration at the

hands of the outraged people he had so long oppressed. At times the manifestations assumed a threatening aspect. Some of the paraders, bolder than the rest, halted beneath the Governor's window to jeer at him and to hurl opprobrious epithets at the man they hated.

Lummers was frightened. "Governor," he said tremblingly, "I don't like the looks of things outside. The town's full of drunken men and there's no telling what those fellows will do when they are in liquor. Hadn't we better close up?"

The Governor glanced up from some letters he was examining and stopped whistling, for recently he had relearned how to whistle at his work. "Nonsense!" he said. "There is no danger. If you are afraid you may go home for the day. Jim and I can get along all right alone."

"I'm not afraid," continued Lummers, though his voice told a different story, "but you'd better take no chances to-day. If those fellows ever start, they'll go gunning for bigger game than I am. Watch out for them."

"Why, everything is going their way. What

more could they ask? They wouldn't make anything by riddling a political corpse and they certainly are sensible enough to know it."

"When a man has mislaid his brains, or has soaked 'em in whiskey," said the secretary, "he isn't sensible enough to know anything. I tell you the whole town is wild."

"Then you and I will set the town a good example."

"All right," persisted Lummers, "but I warn you, just the same. Look out for yourself to-day." He took from a pigeon hole of his desk a heavy Colt's revolver and thrust it into the Governor's hands. "Keep that where you can get at it."

The Carpetbagger gazed at the weapon curiously and shook his head. "I've got through with that sort of work," he said, and, opening the left hand drawer of his desk, he laid the revolver in it and closed it again. A few minutes later, he retired into his private room. Jim came in, whispered mysteriously to Lummers, and tiptoed out again to usher in Willetts.

"Is the old man—?" whispered the lobbyist.

"Sh!" interrupted Lummers, pointing toward the door of the Governor's den.

"Have you got the Midland bill here?" asked Willetts in a low tone.

"No. I don't know where it is. I've looked through everything and can't find it."

"Do you think the old man has it?"

"No. I presume it's up at the house."

"Well, we've got to have it and we've got to have it quick. Understand? Go after it. Tell 'em the Governor sent you."

"If it's at the house I can't get it."

"Of course you can. Go through everything until you find it. Say the Governor wants it. And get back here just as quick as you can. Hurry!"

"I don't like to—"

"Nonsense. You'll never be missed. It won't take ten minutes. Jim can look after the office."

Lummers hurried away and Willetts went out with him, saying he would step up to the senate chamber to see how matters were going. Shortly afterward Mrs. Fairburn's card was brought in.

"Pardon me for disturbing you, to-day," she began, "but I want to see you on a matter of urgent importance."

"I am delighted to see you, Mrs. Fairburn," responded the Governor. "Won't you be seated?"

"My laundress," continued the widow with considerable excitement in her speech, "was the wife of a negro, Zeb, who was found murdered in Thompson's lumber yard. A short time after the poor thing came to me, half distracted, and asked me for enough money to defray the funeral expenses. She insisted on giving me something for security and thrust into my hands this watch. Look at it."

The Governor took the watch and inspected it casually. "It looks like a valuable timepiece," he remarked. "Probably it was stolen. You know the colored brother doesn't always limit himself to henroosts and watermelon patches."

"Look inside of it."

The Governor opened the case. " 'Presented to Wiley Jones by his constituents, Spencer county,

Mississippi, April 10, 1866'," he slowly repeated, reading an inscription.

"Where did this come from?" he hastily inquired. "Who had it?"

"The negro, Zeb."

The Carpetbagger sprang to his feet. "It's as clear as day," he cried. "That black scoundrel shot Jones and stole his watch."

"Pardon me," interrupted Mrs. Fairburn earnestly, "but that is only the beginning of this affair. Suppose we take it for granted that Zeb killed Wiley Jones. Who killed Zeb?"

"That doesn't make any difference. What we're after is the fellow who murdered Jones."

"Ah, but it does make a difference. Listen. That negro was decoyed from his home—"

"Decoyed?"

"Beyond any question. He went to meet a man who owed him money and never was seen again alive. His widow believes he received the money and on his way home was waylaid by robbers and killed."

"Quite likely."

"I don't think so. Governor, the killing of this negro, in itself may appear an insignificant thing, in these days when human life is held so cheap, but it holds the key of old Mr. Reynolds' innocence. I feel sure of it. Zeb was not murdered for his money—negroes never have money—he was killed because he knew too much."

"I'm afraid I don't quite follow you," remarked the Governor, reflectively.

"Why was Mr. Jones murdered?" Mrs. Fairburn continued. "What was the motive? Not money—he had not enough money to tempt anyone. Not robbery—no one would do so desperate a deed for this watch. If Zeb killed him he was hired to do it by some one who wanted Jones out of the way. And the man who paid that negro to commit the first crime has silenced him forever by a knife thrust."

The Carpetbagger carefully looked out of the window. "It may be worth looking into," he said at length. "I'll send for Chief of Police McCullough and talk it over with him." Turning to his

desk he wrote a brief note, folded it and rang for Jim.

"Take this to police headquarters," he said, "and get back just as soon as you can. By the way, where's Lummers?"

"Mistah Lummers done stepped out foh a few minutes, sah."

"All right. Hurry back."

The widow arose to go. "Governor," she said, "find the man who was last seen with that negro; find the man who owed him money, or promised him money, or paid him money; find the man who sent for him last night; find the man whom he met —and you will be face to face with the real murderer of Wiley Jones and slayer of Zeb; thus will the innocence of old Mr. Reynolds be made clear."

"A woman's heart is the best detective. Perhaps you are right; we'll see."

CHAPTER XXXI

MR. WILLETTS MAKES A POINT

Shortly after Mrs. Fairburn left the state house Nellie and Roy called at the Governor's office. The Carpetbagger himself had withdrawn into the inner room and neither Jim nor Lummers was on duty. They looked about the room, surprised to find it unoccupied, and sat down at the Governor's desk.

"Isn't it just awful," remarked the young "soldier" disconsolately, "that we can't do anything but sit down and grow?"

"Awful," echoed Nellie with a sigh. "And if I do go back to Chicago you'll forget me in six months, I s'pose."

"I won't forget you in six thousand years," cried Roy, vehemently. "You just wait and see!"

"I don't want to wait. That's just the trouble. Of course I promised father I wouldn't run away; but if any one were to come along and carry me off I couldn't help that, could I?"

Roy shook his head. "Couldn't do it," he said, "I have given him my word of honor."

"Oh, what did you do that for!"

"What could a soldier do when he was treed?"

"Treed? When were you treed? Who treed you?"

"Never mind."

"Well, Captain Roy Fairburn, I don't think you have managed this affair well, at all. You said you would meet me at the magnolias the other night, but you didn't. If you had come—"

"I did."

"You didn't do any such thing."

"I did."

"Captain Roy Fairburn! What a story!"

"I tell you I did."

"Well, where were you, then?"

"Never mind."

"I didn't see you."

"The Governor did."

"Well, do something! Think of something! Suppose this horrid election should go wrong!"

"They'd take you back to Chicago—if they could; but could they?"

Nellie's pretty pink lips were dangerously close to his own. "Do you think they could?" she asked, and the Governor in the next room heard a sound which startled him from a reverie and brought back the days when he used to hear whippoorwills in Illinois.

"Hello!" he cried, giving a premonitory cough as he entered the room. "What are you doing down here?"

"We won't have to go right back to Chicago, will we?" inquired Nellie, blushing almost as red as the rose in her hair.

"Well—you needn't pack your trunk to-night."

"I don't see why anyone should want to vote against you, anyway. Why do they?"

"Political reasons, I guess."

"I don't believe there ought to be any such reasons."

"Well," laughed the Governor, "I don't know that I do, either; but other folks seem to think differently."

"I don't want Nellie to go back to Chicago," chimed in Roy.

"Why not?"

"Oh, because."

"Because what?"

"And I don't want to go back, either," interrupted Nellie.

"Why?"

"I'd rather stay. Up there there's nothing but school all the time and you never see a—"

"Whippoorwill? That's so—it has been a good many years since I heard one up there."

"I don't want Nellie to go back," spoke up the young lover manfully. "You know what I mean. I want her to stay right here—always."

A kindly light shone in the Governor's eyes. "My boy," he remarked, "you are merely wasting your time with me. You know what I told you the other night. Go home and talk to your mother."

Roy seized his cap. "I'll do it!" he cried. "You stay right here," he continued, addressing Nellie. "I'll be back in a jiffy."

"Father," began Nellie when they were alone, "you aren't sorry to-day, are you?"

"Sorry? Nonsense! Why should I be sorry?"

"You aren't sorry because we are going to be poor again?"

"Poor! My child, I am the richest man in the world to-day." Tenderly he stooped and kissed her. "See what I've got left." Then in a lighter tone he added: "How would you like to be my little secretary to-day and help me with my letters, eh?" Nellie clapped her hands for joy, and giving the old man another kiss and a hug, went with him into the private office.

Willetts came in hurriedly, after making a discreet reconnoisance at the doorway. "Lummers isn't back yet," he muttered. "The woman couldn't do the trick. I didn't much believe she could. It isn't her fault; either he's a fool or he's crazy." He was walking up and down the room in nervous excitement when Lummers entered.

"Did you get it?" he whispered. Lummers nodded.

"Good! Let me have it. Where's the nigger?"

"I don't know. He was here when I left."

"Well, you take care of him if he turns up. Stand at the door out there and while I'm with the Governor don't let anybody come in. Understand?"

Lummers walked out into the reception room, and Willetts started toward the door of the Governor's private office. Before he had taken a half dozen steps the door opened and Gov. Crance came into the room carrying some papers in his hand. He stopped short on seeing the lobbyist.

"Governor," remarked Willetts blandly, "I'm sorry to bother you to-day, but here's a petition I'd like you to look at, if you will."

Making no reply, the Carpetbagger seated himself at his desk. A moment later, he glanced up and, displaying a little annoyance, said peremptorily: "Well, what is it?"

Willetts gave a swift glance about the room and laid the Midland Railway bill before the Governor. The latter started as he recognized the document

before him and glanced up in surprise. He was looking down the muzzle of a revolver.

"Sign that," commanded Willetts.

The Carpetbagger's thin lips tightened about the cigar he was smoking. That was all. "Sit down," he said, coolly.

"Your name. Quick!"

"I wouldn't shoot if I were you."

"Sign it."

"At any rate you'd better not do any shooting till after I sign my name. If you did, you know, the bill wouldn't do you any good."

"You haven't a minute to live unless you do it."

"Now, don't lose your nerve, Willetts, and get careless. I can't do any writing with a bullet hole through me. I'm not a fool; sit down."

Slowly the Governor spread out the paper before him and picked up a pen. Then he rested his left hand carelessly over the left drawer of his desk—beneath it was the revolver Lummers had urged him to keep within reach. It was time for Jim to return, he thought, and where was Lummers? A

band of marchers with fife and drum passed by, making a great din.

"I wouldn't object if you'd waste a little ammunition on those fellows," drily said the Carpetbagger. "They've kept me nearly crazy all day."

As he spoke he pressed the pen into the paper with so much force that the point snapped.

"I'm sorry, but this pen is broken. I'll have to ask you to hand me one from Lummers' desk behind you."

Willetts uttered an oath. "You did that purposely," he cried. "Governor, I don't want to hurt you, but you know me. This means business."

The old man smiled and leaned back in his chair. "I can't very well sign my name without a pen, can I?" he inquired. "Perhaps there's one in the drawer here," he added, motioning toward the right hand drawer, which did not contain the revolver.

"Stop!" cried Willetts, leveling his weapon. "Don't try that, Governor."

"Well, look for yourself."

Willetts did so. Keeping the Governor "cov-

ered" he jerked open the right hand drawer and felt inside it. "There's nothing here," he said.

"Well, I don't know. Maybe there's one in the other drawer."

Willetts walked around the desk, reaching out his hand to open the left drawer and as he did so the Governor suddenly stirred. "There's a pen right on top of Lummers' desk over there," he said. "Shall I get it?"

"Sit down," sternly commanded the gambler, as he backed over to the secretary's desk. He turned his head for a moment to pick up the pen. It was only an instant, but it was long enough for the Governor to pull open the left drawer. Within it lay a revolver in plain view. Above it rested the Carpetbagger's left hand.

Willetts threw down the pen and the Governor picked it up. "If I sign this," he drawled, evidently fighting for delay, "how do I know that I'll get a cent out of it? You said you'd give me fifty thousand. Does that agreement hold?"

"We'll treat you right," growled Willetts.

"Well, this doesn't look much like it."

Nellie entered from the private office, opening a door squarely behind Willetts. Seeing a strange man pointing a revolver at her father, she uttered a loud cry of alarm. Willetts turned upon her with the rapidity of a flash of lightning. Then he wheeled about to keep the Governor "covered." The old man was upon his feet; his long left arm was extended and the murderous muzzle of a big revolver was thrust into Willetts' face.

"Drop it!" came in stern tones from the Governor. The gambler's grasp relaxed and his weapon fell to the floor. The Carpetbagger picked it up.

"A moment ago," he said slowly, "I didn't have a pistol handy. Now I have one more than I can use. There's yours."

He threw Willetts' weapon before him on the desk. The gambler stretched forth his hand eagerly, but suddenly drew it back again, as if he were afraid he might be stung. He had seen something in the clear blue eyes of the tall man before him that he didn't like.

"Governor," he stammered, "I—I—don't want to fight you."

"Don't you?" sarcastically asked the Carpetbagger. "I must have misunderstood you. I thought you did."

CHAPTER XXXII

WHAT JIM FOUND

Toward evening Major Reynolds strolled over to the residence of Mrs. Fairburn. He found her sitting upon the veranda and, as the red glow of sunset lighted up her face, he thought he never had appreciated her rare beauty before. Certainly she never had seemed so beautiful to him.

"Alice," he said, as she arose to greet him, "I am Governor of Mississippi. The returns are not in yet, but my advices leave no room for doubt as to the result."

"I congratulate you, Major, with all my heart, and I also congratulate the state."

"And now I have come to you for my reward."

"The state has already rewarded you, Major."

"I care not for that, Alice. You know the only reward I have longed for, hoped for, prayed for. May I not claim it now?"

"Let me ask you a question: The election is over; has Gov. Crance acted in good faith toward you?"

"Yes; I think he has."

"Has he fulfilled every obligation to you and to himself."

"I believe so."

"Has he kept his promises? Has he acted honorably? Are you satisfied that he has made full restoration to the state so far as he could do it?"

"Yes."

"And what is his reward?"

"A clear conscience and the respect of his fellow men."

"Does he command your respect for what he has done?"

"Certainly."

"Then, may he not claim mine?"

The Major hesitated. "I will admit I was wrong the other night," he said, "in calling you to account for your friendliness toward him; but it was my great love for you which prompted me to do it.

But I told you then that as soon as I was elected Governor I should call for your answer. Alice—"

"Come into the house," she said. A half hour later they came out together and walked down to the State House.

During the exciting scene which followed the unexpected entrance of Nellie Crance into the Governor's office that young woman was not idle. She did not wait to see the old Carpetbagger turn the tables on his antagonist, but ran screaming into the reception room, where she found Lummers standing on guard at the door. Again and again she called upon the recreant secretary for help, but he paid no attention to her entreaties. Suddenly a black giant loomed up in the entrance. "Oh, Jim! Jim!" she cried. "Come quick! They're killing Father!" Lummers barred the negro's way. Jim's long right arm shot out like a catapult and his fist landed squarely between Lummers' eyes. The secretary reeled backward the entire length of the room and fell limp and apparently lifeless in a heap

upon the floor. Another second and Jim stood at the Governor's side.

"Foh de Lawd's sake!" he gasped. "What's de matter?"

"Jim," calmly replied the Carpetbagger, "Mr. Willetts, having no further use for his pistol, has kindly made you a present of it. Take it. It's yours."

The darkey looked at Willetts. "Take it," commanded the Governor. "You may have it." Jim picked up the weapon gingerly, as if he were afraid it might explode.

"Somebody should get a doctor for Mr. Lummers," cried Nellie.

"Lummers?" said the Carpetbagger. "What's the matter with Lummers? Where is he?"

"When Miss Nellie called me just now," explained Jim, "Mistah Lummers he sorter got in mah way. An' I tried to get by 'im an' I couldn't. An' I put out mah hand kind o' sudden like. An' I felt suthin'. An' I looked down an' dar was Mistah Lummers gwine t' sleep. Reckon I'd better look

after him a little foh dat ain't no fitten place for a man t' dose off."

"If he's hurt bring a doctor," said the Governor, just as a police officer in uniform appeared in the doorway and saluted. "Ah, McCullough, come in. This fellow is a trifle too careless with firearms. I had to take his pistol away from him a few minutes ago. Take him away. Lock him up."

"Governor, don't do this," pleaded Willetts, "I've always been your friend—always."

"That may be," responded the Governor, "but I don't like your familiarity sometimes."

Major Reynolds came in with Mrs. Fairburn on his arm. At the doorway they halted, surprised by the unexpected sight of a police officer. "Pardon our intrusion, Governor," said the Major. "What's the matter?"

The Governor threw down his weapon. "Nothing at all, thank you," he said. "Mr. Willetts and I merely had a slight difference of opinion. He thought I would make a good target."

At the mention of the gambler's name Mrs. Fair-

burn started. As the officer turned to lead Willetts away, she stepped forward. "May I speak to Mr. Willetts a moment?" she asked.

"Certainly," replied the Governor.

"Mr. Willetts," she began with a voice soft and sweet as a siren's song, "I don't know what has just occurred here and I hope you will pardon me for interrupting you at such a time. But you are now in a position to help me and perhaps I also can assist you. My laundress is the wife of the negro Zeb, who was found dead in Thompson's lumber yard. I am told that he formerly was in your employ."

"I had a nigger a while ago to look after my horses. I suppose it's the same fellow—I don't know," growled the gambler.

"Well, now, Mr. Willetts," the widow proceeded insinuatingly, "here is the point. Zeb left home to get some money you owed him. He was waylaid by robbers on his way home. They took whatever he had, but there is no way of telling how much they found. It has occurred to me that per-

haps you didn't pay Zeb at all. If you didn't I hope you will turn over the money to his widow right away. Poor thing, she needs it."

"Well, I paid the nigger—every cent I owed him. That settles that."

A queer light glowed in Mrs. Fairburn's eyes, but the gambler did not notice it.

"Then you gave Zeb the money?" she softly inquired, stepping closer.

"Why, yes."

"When did you see him last?"

"Early in the evening. I don't know the exact hour."

"You sent for him?"

"He'd been working for me. I owed him a small balance and told him to come up and get it."

"He kept the appointment you made?"

"Yes."

"You met him?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Fairburn was standing face to face with Willetts. Looking him straight in the eyes she

said, as quietly and as conclusively as one might discuss the weather or the price of butter: "And you murdered him."

Willetts did not start. He had been a gambler too long to betray whatever might be passing in his mind. He laughed uneasily. "Did I?" he inquired. "Well, I'd entirely forgotten that. Perhaps I did."

"You decoyed that negro from his home. You waited for him in the dark. You met him as a friend and drove your knife through his heart because you were afraid of what he knew!"

A sneer was the only response. The officer stepped forward and laid his hand on Willetts' shoulder. "Come," he said, laconically. Big Jim stood in the doorway and did not step aside to permit them to pass. "'Scuse me, sah," he said, "but I'd like to—"

"Silence, you black rascal!" shouted the hot-headed Major. "How dare you interfere in—"

The Governor raised his hand. "Pardon!" he said. "Let him speak. Go on, Jim. What is it?"

"Thankee, sah. Dis heah fool niggah Zeb was mah wife's cousin—an' he was a bad man. A didn't say nuffin 'bout it befo' and cause foh why: I didn't want no knife holes in mah shirt. I didn't want nobody come slashing up my gyarments. An' dat's jest what dat fool niggah 'd do."

"Well, is that all?" impatiently inquired the Carpetbagger.

"Naw, sah. Dat ar lady what's a mohning foh her husband has been comin' ober t' mah house most ebbery day an' she's been sayin' things t' mah wife."

"Yes."

" 'Pears like Wiley Jones an' Mistah Willetts was bofe of 'em in dis heah railway lan' deal. An' dey quarrel. Den dar's Wiley Jones—killed. Den heah comes a fool niggah toting 'round Wiley Jones' watch. Who'd git Wiley Jones' watch, 'ceptin' de man whut kill 'im? An' why he want t' kill Wiley Jones, anyway, 'ceptin' he git paid fur it?"

Willetts looked bored. "All this may be very entertaining," he said. "No doubt you find it so. But if there is no objection, I would prefer to—"

"Hold on, Willetts!" sternly exclaimed the Governor. "I'll tell you when to go."

"Dat mohnin'," proceeded Jim, "a niggah 'oman comes a' runnin' up t' me an' she says 'Zeb's a-lyin' ober yander in de lumberyard.' I run ober dar, an' dar is Zeb wid a big slash in his breast—dead. An' dis heah is a funny thing—"

The negro stopped and began fumbling in his pocket. "Dar was Zeb a-lyin' on de groun' wid one han' shet up tight—dis way. An' hangin' right outen heah, atween his fingers, was dis little piece o' chain what he cotch off de man what was a killin' of 'im—cotch off while he was a-grabbin' foh his life."

Jim extended his hand. Resting on its palm was a golden watch charm—a large horseshoe set with diamonds.

"I see dis heah watch chahm befo," continued the negro solemnly. "I see it often—right in dis heah room, too—right dar!" As he spoke he pointed dramatically toward Willetts' vest.

Governor Crance took the glittering horseshoe

and examined it critically. "It's a lie!" shouted Willetts. "It never was mine!"

"Oh, course not, of course not!" replied the Governor. "I have no doubt you can easily explain to a jury just why your watch chain at present isn't complete. If you have any trouble in doing so, however, we stand ready I think, to supply the missing link." Turning to the officer he added: "Take him away. No bail. Hold him for murder."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE WATERS CLEARED

As Chief McCullough left the Governor's office with his prisoner, the latter's wrists encircled by steel handcuffs, Roy met them in the lobby. Breathless with astonishment, he rushed into the executive chamber and Nellie immediately undertook to explain to him everything that had occurred during his brief absence—the assault upon the Governor, her own opportune arrival, the coming of Jim, the meeting of Lummers, the arrest of Willetts and the charge against him. She made only one mistake—she attempted to tell all this in one sentence without stopping for breath and, as a result, Roy merely gathered from her excited chatter that something wonderful had happened. With true soldierly instinct, he regretted that he had not been on hand while the fighting was in progress.

Major Reynolds extended his hand to Jim.

"Give me your black hand, sir," he said. "For my father and for myself I thank you. I shall not forget what you have done. This place shall be yours, sir, as long as I am Governor, if you want it."

Jim grasped the Major's hand timidly.

"Thankee, sah," he said. "Thankee, kindly." Then he glanced toward the Carpetbagger. "But dar's nebber gwine to be moh dan one gub'nor foh me, nohow, of he'll hab me wid 'im."

"Governor," said the Southerner, "in advance of the returns, I want to congratulate you, sir, as the only man who ever defeated me in a personal campaign."

With a little hesitation Melville Crance grasped the hand that was extended toward him. There was doubt in his voice as he wonderingly said: "Ah, Major, you're joking; but I'm heartily glad that the shoe is on the other foot to-day. You are virtually governor of Mississippi at this moment and elected by the largest majority ever given a candidate. I'm not sorry. I congratulate the state, and I wish you—"

"I repeat it, sir, the victory to-day is yours."

"If you believe that, Major," said the Carpetbagger lightly, "my advices, I am certain, are more accurate than yours. You have carried—"

"I have carried Mississippi—that's all. You, sir, have done more than that; you have carried yourself. A political victory is mine but in it I find the severest defeat of my lifetime."

"Defeat?"

"Unconditional defeat."

Governor Crance looked at his gallant adversary in bewilderment. The Major turned toward Mrs. Fairburn, made her a courtly bow and walked away without a word.

The room had suddenly grown still. Nellie and Roy had ceased their chattering. The silence was oppressive. Doubtingly, timidly, the Carpetbagger glanced at the woman who had saved him from himself. Slowly she raised her eyes until they met his gaze—they were swimming with tears, but there was no sadness in them.

"Governor," she said as she extended her hand—her voice as sweet as music in the night—"the water of that mountain brook has become clear."

Outside there was a confused babel of voices mingled with cheers and the sound of hurrying feet. Jim stuck his woolly head in at the door. "De legislatur hab adjourned!" he cried.

But the Carpetbagger neither heard nor knew. The woman he loved was in his arms. "I have lost a state," he said, "but I have won an empire."

THE END.

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